

# UPSTATE Health

UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

Spring 2017

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TEACH  
DOCTORS

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# Healthy humility



## In caring for patients, doctors better themselves

Some of the most profound pieces of medical education have little to do with medicine. They are lessons that come from the experience of caring for patients. A neurologist, an emergency physician and a pediatrician from Upstate share their stories on the following pages.

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PHOTOS BY SUSAN KAHN



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### Everyone deserves quality care

Emergency physician William Paolo, MD, trained for four years at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, the oldest hospital in America. Now a world-renowned academic medical center comprising 11 acute and community hospitals, Bellevue opened as a six-bed infirmary in 1736, when George Washington was 4 years old.

Nurses and doctors who work at Bellevue are used to caring for a diverse population that often includes wealthy, powerful dignitaries and celebrities.

Paolo's mentor during his residency training was Lewis Goldfrank, MD, one of the founding fathers of modern emergency medicine. One day, Goldfrank pulled Paolo aside. He told the young protégé to prepare himself for a special patient. Escorting him toward the patient's bed, Goldfrank explained that the patient had a sensitive problem and would require Paolo's complete attention and best care.

Goldfrank pulled back the curtain.

Paolo's VIP sat on the bed in soiled and smelly clothing. He reeked of alcohol. His head was infested with lice.

Paolo recalls Goldfrank's lesson that emergency medicine was an egalitarian specialty — and every patient was a VIP, deserving of the same quality of care.

"We can't make it as a society unless everyone makes it," Goldfrank is known for saying.

If doctors were to discriminate, to overlook the disenfranchised, or offer substandard care, Goldfrank warned, "we fall apart as a humanistic group."

It's a foundational belief that Paolo carries with him in his role as an associate professor and residency program director in emergency medicine at Upstate University Hospital.

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