



# Support for the Clinical Scientist

BY S. A. UNGER

## EUGENE R. MINDELL, MD, CHAIR IN ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY ESTABLISHED

Perhaps no one knows more about the accomplishments of the UB Department of Orthopaedics, past and present, than Eugene R. Mindell, MD, who was appointed the department's first full-time faculty member in 1964 and subsequently served as chair of the department for 24 years.

The advanced technologies pioneered by UB orthopaedic surgeons are a continued source of pride for the 87-year-old Mindell since many of these advances build upon a foundation of excellence he helped put in place decades ago.

Because he knows firsthand the long-term planning and commitment needed to establish a department that has faculty and training programs of international renown, Mindell has dedicated much time and energy in recent years to promoting awareness about aspects of academic medicine that need to be enhanced if this level of excellence is to be maintained. One such aspect that he focuses on with a sense of urgency is the need to recruit and retain clinical scientists.

"I think we need to do everything we can to convince people that we have to have more clinical scientists—investigators who combine basic science with medicine," says Mindell. "These individuals have knowledge and skills in the appropriate basic sciences to take a clinical problem into the laboratory, research possible solutions and then apply the new information to their patients. Their contributions are crucial to the development of discoveries that lead to improvements in the way we take care of patients."

A clinical scientist himself, with expertise in musculoskeletal oncology, pathology and trauma, Mindell cautions that the decline in the number of clinical scientists is "a serious problem for research in all medical specialties."

In an effort to counter this trend, Mindell worked closely with the Office of Advancement in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences to help obtain gifts to fund the endowed Eugene R. Mindell, MD, Chair in Orthopaedic Surgery, which was completed in August 2008.

The endowed chair was initiated in 1996 with a lead gift from Byron A. Genner III, MD '45, an orthopaedic surgeon who practiced for many years in Potomac, Maryland. Genner, who died in 1997, was a UB medi-

cal student when Mindell was a member of the volunteer faculty. He felt indebted to the university for the superb medical education he received and chose to make a financial gift to UB in Mindell's name.

Funds for the newly endowed chair will greatly enhance the orthopaedic department's ability to maintain its clinical, research and teaching edge into the future because it will make it possible to attract a highly qualified clinical scientist to Buffalo.

"We now have a better chance of getting a person to come to Buffalo who wouldn't ordinarily come here just to practice," explains Mindell, "and this person will have an opportunity to develop an academic program, teach students and residents and develop their own research. This, in turn, will increase clinical activities at the university-affiliated hospital

where they are based and bring patients into our area from outside Buffalo."

Mindell says that the UB Department of Orthopaedics has a long and successful history of bringing such recruits to Buffalo, to the benefit of both the university and the community. As an example, he describes how Edward H. Simmons, MD, an internationally renowned spine surgeon was recruited in 1983 from Toronto, Canada, to fill a dual role as chief of orthopaedics at Buffalo General Hospital (BGH) and director of UB's orthopaedic spine service.

"Dr. Simmons developed strong clinical research and fellowship programs in spine surgery at the General that, in turn, helped attract other orthopaedic spine surgeons to Buffalo, including Dr. James White and Dr. William Capicotto, both of whom were graduates of his fellowship training program," notes Mindell. "He also recruited his son [Edward D. Simmons, MD] to practice in Buffalo."

Following the retirement of Edward H. Simmons in 1993, Kenneth Krackow, MD (developer of computer-assisted total knee

replacement), was recruited to UB and BGH from Johns Hopkins Hospital and School of Medicine, where he served as a full-time faculty member.

"As chair of the search committee, I sought out Dr. Krackow because of his reputation as an excellent teacher and researcher who has an international reputation for his expertise in knee reconstruction for arthritis," recalls Mindell. "I had heard about him from Dr. Clement Sledge, a famous orthopaedic surgeon in the Harvard University program, who was based at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston."

Since coming to Buffalo 16 years ago, "Dr. Krackow has done for total-knee-joint surgery what Dr. Simmons did for spine surgery," says Mindell.

Over the years, many other such recruits have made similar contributions to Buffalo and the university, according to Mindell. These include the department's current chair, Lawrence Bone, MD, who graduated from the UB School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences in 1973, after which he completed a general surgical residency at Erie County Medical Center (ECMC), where he developed an interest in trauma.

After practicing general surgery in his hometown of Warsaw, New York, for three years, Bone decided to expand his interest in trauma and left Western New York to complete an orthopaedic residency at the University of Texas and Parkland Hospital. After serving additional trauma fellowships in Texas, Switzerland and Germany, he was recruited to return to Buffalo to direct the musculoskeletal trauma service at ECMC. He also received dual appointments in the departments of surgery and orthopaedics at UB.

Mindell served on the search committee that brought Bone back to Buffalo, and worked closely with Bone's mentor at ECMC, John Border, MD, to accomplish this. A highly respected trauma surgeon, Border had been recruited into the Department of Orthopaedics by Mindell

in 1986 in an effort to foster collaboration between the departments of surgery and orthopedics and to recognize Border's commitment to orthopaedic trauma.

"Dr. Border and Dr. Bone are widely recognized today for markedly improving the care and outcome of the polytrauma patient," explains Mindell.

As current chair of the UB Department of Orthopaedics, Bone has continued the long tradition of supporting clinical scientists, as did his predecessor, Robert Gillespie, MD, whom Mindell credits with increasing the number of full-time faculty in the department, putting the practice plan on solid footing, founding the UB Sports Medicine Institute under the leadership of Robert Smolinski, MD '83, and establishing the Orthopaedic Research Laboratory, which is now directed by biomedical engineer Mark T. Ehrensberger, PhD.

Other examples of successful clinical scientists in the UB orthopaedic surgery program abound, says Mindell, such as the late Theodore Papademetriou, MD, whose focus was on arthritis surgery and medical education, and Clayton Peimer, MD, whose expertise was in hand surgery and reimplantation.

"The point is that without funds available to attract and retain such physicians, they will most likely go elsewhere to practice," says Mindell, who further notes that all but a few universities across the country face the same dilemma as UB in this regard, and many are proactively formulating strategies to confront the decline in the number of clinical scientists.

Foremost among these strategies are efforts to make funds available to support the clinical-research efforts of these individuals.

"The clinical scientist is where the important new discoveries come from—that's the way it's been in the past, and I'm convinced that's the way it will be in the future," says Mindell. "And I'm interested in the future." **BP**



At a dinner announcing the completion of the chair are, from left: LAWRENCE BONE, MD '73, chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, EUGENE MINDELL, MD, and BRIAN MCGRATH, MD '87, clinical associate professor of orthopaedics.

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