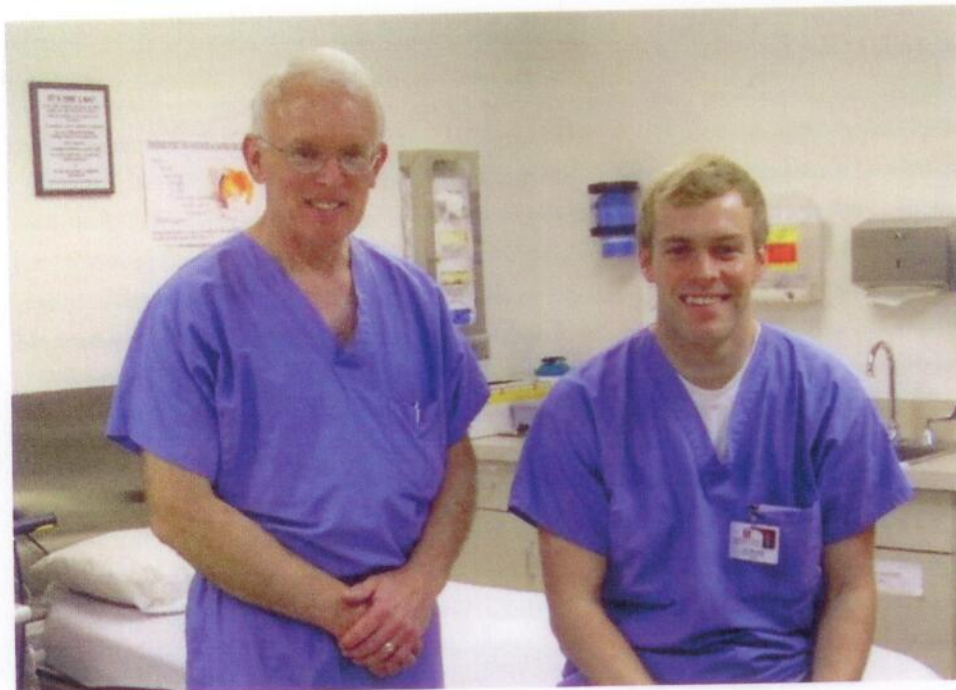


Hospital delivery comes full circle for rural med student

By Lindsey V. Corey



Dave Staub and Carl Rasmussen

Twenty-six years after Dave Staub delivered Carl Rasmussen, they met again in the hospital room.

This time it was a four-week rotation.

A second-year med student at the University of South Dakota (USD), Rasmussen went home to Sisseton, S.D., population 2,454, to complete his sophomore rural preceptorship under the direction of Staub, MD, and partners at Coteau de Prairies Hospital and Clinic.

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Dave Staub, MD

It was his first rotation and chance to see how classroom and lab work translated to patient care.

“I’d been stuck in a classroom, so I was really looking forward to being in a working environment on a daily basis and getting the rhythm and feel of that in my head and to finally start to apply some of the knowledge and

to form a more applicable framework to all that book knowledge we’d been tediously working through,” Rasmussen says. “It’s safe to say it exceeded my expectations.”

Day one at Coteau de Prairies, he found himself scrubbing in on a C-section.

“I’d maybe observed a handful of surgeries from a distance, and here I am assisting on my first day,” he recalls. “It was kind of a whirlwind. I remember being surprised when all of a sudden they are removing an infant from the uterus. It’s like I forgot what we were in there for. My head was taking in all the anatomy and focusing on what I had to do, and then holy smokes, there’s a brand new baby.”

Rasmussen also spent time in the emergency room and clinic. The closest large hospital is an hour and a half away in Fargo, N.D.

“I feel like I was exposed to the whole gamut of primary care medicine and the way providers have to work with limited resources, and I think that’s an important building block,” he says. “If you don’t have the foundation, I don’t think you’re going to put together as accurate of a broader picture of how it all fits together.”

Staub, USD clinical associate professor of medicine, has been practicing in Sisseton for 34 years and taught about 30 medical students. He says he values the active learning colleagues at his rural hospital and clinic provide.

“You need to have the student understand that they may not know everything, but nobody in medicine ever does,” he says. “I have all my students see patients,

and I may not be in the room all the time. They need to get over the fear of meeting somebody, and pretty soon they are comfortable with the process and gain confidence in the human, eye-to-eye humanity part of medicine. Learning isn't watching; it's doing, and Carl is self-motivated, so it didn't take long for him to jump in and do exams."

At first Rasmussen hesitated taking the opportunity to complete his rural rotation in his hometown, but he knew he'd get to work with members of the nearby Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe, and after being away for eight years, he didn't know many of the Coteau de Prairies patients.

In addition to being able to "enjoy Mom's home cooking," Rasmussen says he appreciated Staub's approach to training.

"That mentoring style is a refreshing way to learn

medicine," he says. "You can tell when a doctor enjoys it and when they feel burdened by it, so you definitely value someone like Dr. Staub, who devotes so much time and energy to get you involved in learning."

Rasmussen sought out Staub, his then primary care physician, during his undergraduate education for advice on pursuing a medical career.

"I asked him if he could still recognize the reasons he went into medicine," Rasmussen remembers. "He assured me that he definitely could on a daily basis."

Rasmussen says he could see himself practicing in a small town after his residency.

"I'm trying to remain open-minded so I experience the full scope of each rotation, but at the same time, I definitely feel most strongly drawn to primary care and feel like family medicine would be a good fit for me," Rasmussen says. "I like that you're working with patients of any age and seeing them at the frontlines of care. I also like that it's needed, especially right now." 