

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: *Michael L. Weaver, MD, FACEP, CDM*

Improving Emergency Services for Sexual Assault Victims and Advancing Health Equity

By Jim Braibish, *Kansas City Medicine*



Michael L. Weaver, MD, FACEP, CDM,

has been a pioneer locally and nationally in the development of emergency

care services for victims of sexual assault as well as elder abuse, child abuse and other trauma. He has also been a champion for health equity as an educator locally and nationally on reducing health disparities for patients who have been marginalized. His work has made a huge impact for many.

For these contributions, Dr. Weaver has been chosen to receive the 2021 KCMS Lifetime Achievement Award. He is the first African American to receive the award.

His trailblazing began right out of high school. After graduating from Rockhurst High School in 1971, Dr. Weaver became the first African American to complete the six-year program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine directly from high school as a member of the inaugural class. (Other Blacks had enrolled in and graduated from the UMKC medical school with advance standing such as undergraduate degrees). From there, he completed residency at Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City and in 1980 joined the emergency medicine department. He remained with Saint Luke's Health System for 41 years until his retirement July 1, 2021.

During his time with Saint Luke's, he

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was director of emergency services from 1981 to 1997, including its designation as a Level I Trauma Center. And in 1985 he led the establishment of the Department of Emergency Medicine, a position he chaired from 1985 to 1998. He was medical director of clinical forensic medicine from 1980 to his retirement, and was medical director for equity, diversity and inclusion from 2006 to 2021. He has been on the teaching faculty of the UMKC School of

Medicine at the hospital since 1981 and was named a full clinical professor of emergency medicine in 2018.

ESTABLISHING FORENSIC MEDICINE PROTOCOLS

In the emergency medicine community, Dr. Weaver soon realized that victims of sexual assault and other abuse have special needs that were not being met by conventional emergency care. Besides treating any injuries, these needs include providing trauma-informed care, testing for sexually transmitted diseases, and collecting forensic evidence such as DNA samples that can be used in the criminal justice system.

“Saint Luke's was the first private sexual assault center in the country, having started in 1974,” Dr. Weaver recalled. He was appointed medical director of the program his first year in practice.

He expanded this program to a full clinical forensic medicine program that also encompassed child abuse, elder abuse, domestic violence, gun violence and other trauma. The program grew as Saint Luke's opened the north, east and south hospitals in the 1980s and 1990s, and he directed the program system-wide.

Dr. Weaver took his concerns to the national level in the American College of Emergency Physicians. He was a member of the ACEP National Sexual Assault Task Force from 1997-1999 that developed and published guidelines for treating sexual assault and sexual abuse victims. He was founding co-chair of the ACEP Forensic Section from 2006-2010 and remains a member.



(Above left) Dr. Weaver speaks at a “Start by Believing Day” with sexual assault prevention advocates in 2019. Former mayor Sly James is at far left; at right holding certificate is Julie Donelon of the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault. (Above right) Dr. Weaver receives the Healthcare Equity Award from the Black Health Care Coalition in 2018.

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“With ACEP, I was a strong supporter of the development of the national Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program, which is now the national standard. I have taught this protocol to nurses in Kansas City, nationally and internationally, as well as for the U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Justice and American Bar Association,” Dr. Weaver explained. He also helped the DOJ Office on Violence Against Women develop its National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exams for Adults and Adolescents.

Dr. Weaver is a founding member of the Kansas City Interdisciplinary Response to Sexual Assault and a founding board member of End Violence Against Women International. He worked to establish the national “Start by Believing Day” observed the first Wednesday of April in recent years. The goal of the observance is to

encourage victims to report their assaults and that those in law enforcement, health care, etc., provide a supportive response rather than one that doubts or questions the victim.

He has also shared his expertise in forensic medicine by authoring numerous articles, co-authoring books and lecturing internationally. He has been honored by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department for his efforts and received the 2005 Visionary Award from the International Association of Forensic Nurses.

FORGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Besides being a trailblazer himself, he has worked to help others become informed, locally and nationally, on health equity and reducing disparities in clinical outcomes. He received a certificate

in Diversity Management in Healthcare from Georgetown in 2014, and has taught for the American Hospital Association Institute for Diversity and Health Equity since 2014. Dr. Weaver has also worked to support African Americans pursuing careers in medicine. In 2004, he established a minority scholarship at UMKC School of Medicine.

“I always remember the challenges I faced as an African American med student, resident and physician. For that reason, I have always been sensitive to the need to give back,” Dr. Weaver said.

For the past 16 years, he has led the Critical Mass Gathering event for students who are underrepresented in medicine from Kansas City’s three area medical schools—UMKC, the University of Kansas, and Kansas City University. This annual conference provides information and sup-



(Above left) Dr. Weaver, center, was among UMKC medical students participating in the 1972 groundbreaking for the school's building. (Above right) Dr. Weaver, top right, in a group shot of participants in the 2019 Critical Mass Gathering for underrepresented students from the three area medical schools plus physician mentors.

port to minority students. To continue this work in retirement, he founded Mission Vision Project KC, a nonprofit that aims to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in the Kansas City health care workforce—not just physicians, but all health careers. Besides Black students, it also encompasses Hispanic/Latinx and Native Peoples.

Dr. Weaver discussed the importance of the Mission Vision Project: “Health and health care disparities have really been brought to the forefront with the COVID-19 pandemic. Culturally congruent care improves health outcomes. Having a diverse workforce including physicians is really needed for the metro. It’s hard for students to be what they can’t see, and we want to provide early K-12 exposure to minority students the vision of a career in health care. This expands on what we’ve been doing with the three medical schools.”

Besides his work to improve care to sexual assault victims and to advance diversity, Dr. Weaver has been active in the emergency medicine field in other ways. He was medical director of Saint Luke’s Fixed Wing Air Ambulance Service for 19 years and the Kansas City Life Flight Eagle Helicopter for 20 years. He was a board

member of the Kansas City ambulance system (MAST) from 1991 to 2006. He was president of the Missouri Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians from 1987-1989.

For the state of Missouri, Dr. Weaver has held appointments from governors of both political parties. He served on the Governor’s Advisory Council on Missouri’s Emergency Medical Services from 1983 to 1996 and was chair from 1988 to 1996. He was a member of the Board of Health & Senior Services from 2007 to 2020.

MENTORS

While Dr. Weaver points to the many mentors he has had in his career, he highlights three. The first is his parents. “They were both school teachers and taught me the importance of a good education.”

Richardson K. Noback, MD, founding dean of the UMKC School of Medicine, is the second. “He taught us years ago to also recognize the important influence of a patient’s ‘social setting’ in their health and health care. He was ahead of his time—this is what we now call the patient’s ‘social determinants of health.’”

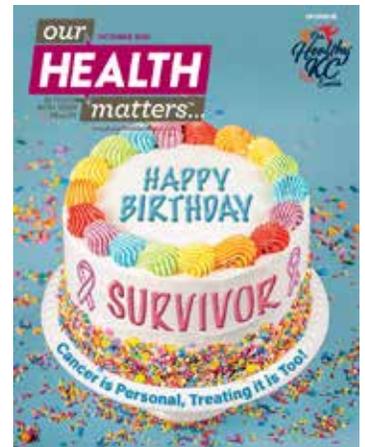
The third is J. Chris Perryman, MD, senior vice president and chief medical officer of Saint Luke’s Health System. Dr.

Weaver said, “He and I have known each other since the late 1970s, when he taught me during my residency at Saint Luke’s. Then fast forward a few years when I again began to learn from him as I reported to him administratively. He helped me develop and grow not only the clinical forensic program but multiple diversity, equity and inclusion programs at Saint Luke’s.”

About Dr. Weaver, Dr. Perryman said: “Looking at the reach and influence of all Dr. Michael Weaver has accomplished in his 40-year career with Saint Luke’s Health System, it’s clear to see the many ways his passion for health care equity, clinical diversity, exceptional patient care, and the practice of ethics in medicine has helped shape the estimable organization we are today. We’ve long said that Saint Luke’s is ‘The best place to get care. The best place to give care.’ More than that, we’re proud that with Dr. Weaver’s influence, leadership and guidance, Saint Luke’s is also a more diverse and inclusive place to give care, and a more equitable place to get care.”

Dr. Weaver was the 1997 winner of the UMKC School of Medicine E. Grey Diamond, M.D., Take Wing award; he is also an E. Grey Diamond Fellow.

Current UMKC School of Medicine
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Our Health Matters has been recognized with numerous awards including the 2017 Black Girls Rock Award from the Alpha Kappa Alpha Xi Tau Omega Chapter, the 2011 Delta Sigma Theta Women of Courage Award, the 2007 Black Health Care Coalition Media Award, the 2007 Missouri Public Health Association Media Award and the 2006 Kansas City Chronic Disease Association Health Media Award. Ramsey also served as a member of the Kansas City Minority Health Commission for six years.

Daphne Bascom, MD, chair of the KCMS & Foundation Wellness and Prevention Committee, praised Ramsey's work: "Ruth has been a key leader in providing resources to our community about health, wellness and care. As the publisher of *Our Health Matters*, Ruth has focused on developing partnerships with key stakeholders across the KC metro to bring timely, relevant and digestible information to all members of our community."

About the award, Ramsey said, "I'm surprised and honored. This award shows

that someone believes in what we do and that this health education work is important for our community. We invite and encourage other health organizations to consider partnering with us."

To learn more, pick up a copy of *Our Health Matters* at a local CVS, hospital or community center or download digital editions at kcourhealthmatters.com. ☺

DR. MICHAEL L. WEAVER (continued from page 18)

Dean Mary Anne Jackson, MD, said, "Dr. Weaver is a pioneer in medicine and has been my colleague and friend for over four decades. A leader at the local, state and national levels, Dr. Weaver's mentorship for underrepresented minority students who aspire to a career in medicine has always been center stage in his focus. His continuing dedication to the Mission Vision Project KC will assure that underrepresented Kansas City students of all ages will follow their dream and pursue a career in medicine."

In retirement, Dr. Weaver looks forward to spending more time with family as

well as pursuing the Mission Vision Project KC. After years of devotion to emergency medicine, he got married for the first time a little over a year ago. With his wife, Jami-la, he gained two sons, ages 13 and 18, the latter a senior at Rockhurst High.

Reflecting on his career, Dr. Weaver said, "I am so thankful for the educational and health care institutions in our KC metro area. If not for the opportunity to be educated at Rockhurst High School, the six-year program at UMKC School of Medicine, and to begin and grow my professional career at Saint Luke's, I wouldn't be prepared to give back to the community

in this chapter of my life."

He continued, "I spent my professional career at a hospital that was progressive and innovative. Saint Luke's supported my ideas where we were able to improve patient care, both in forensic medicine and in diversity, equity and inclusion." ☺