

findings

Dr. Sorrell honored for research, education, health care

Nebraskans for Research recently honored Michael Sorrell, M.D., professor and section chief of gastroenterology and hepatology at UNMC, for his landmark contributions to research, education and health care. More than 290 community leaders attended the Tribute to Research luncheon on April 26th. Dr. Sorrell is known nationally and internationally for his expertise in liver disease and transplantation and gastrointestinal disorders. As a researcher, he has spent his career advancing the understanding of liver disease and contributing what are considered landmark findings. His work — along with that of colleagues, many of whom he inspired to pursue that research — has helped in the detection, treatment and prevention of alcoholic liver disease.

“Dr. Sorrell truly embodies all of the qualities that I admire and that our group, Nebraskans for Research, stands for,” said Carol Russell, president of NFR. “He is a tremendously talented, yet deeply compassionate physician who has touched so many lives over his medical career. At the same time, he is an equally brilliant researcher who has helped Nebraska stand out internationally in the area of liver disease research. Finally, he is personally involved in the community and has given his support both in time and financial resources to causes that make



From left: Shirley Sorrell, Beverly Maurer, Chuck Durham, Mike Sorrell, M.D., and Harold M. Maurer, M.D.

this community and this state a better place to live.”

A 1957 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dr. Sorrell received his medical degree in 1959 from the UNMC College of Medicine. A native of Syracuse, Nebraska, Dr. Sorrell was a general practitioner in Tecumseh, Nebraska, from 1960 to 1966. He left to do a residency in internal medicine followed by a fellowship in gastroenterology, both at UNMC.

Following his residency training, Dr. Sorrell completed a one-year traineeship in cardiovascular medicine with the National Institutes of Health and a two-year NIH traineeship in

hepatic disease and nutrition at the New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry, Newark. He joined the UNMC faculty in 1971 as an assistant professor in internal medicine and was elevated to associate professor in 1973 and professor in 1976.

He held several key leadership positions at both UNMC and the Veterans Administration Medical Center. For the VA, he served as chief of the section of gastroenterology-liver disease from 1973 to 1976 and as associate chief of staff/research from 1974 to 1982. In 1981, he was named chairman of the UNMC Department of Internal Medicine, a post that he held for 10 years. When he decided to step down

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from the chairman's position, he became medical director for the liver transplant program and chief of the section of gastroenterology/hepatology.

Dr. Sorrell received the University of

Nebraska Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity (1980) and the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases Distinguished Service Award (1999). He has been funded continuously for the past 30

years by the National Institutes of Health and by Veterans Affairs.

"The excitement of doing research frankly is what brought me back from general practice," Dr. Sorrell said. "I am so grateful to the state of Nebraska for allowing me to be here and take part in the transformation of this university. It would not be the university it is today if we didn't do research."

As a physician, people around the world seek Dr. Sorrell for his expertise in gastroenterology. He has been selected as one of America's Top Doctors and Best Doctors in America by those national guides and was listed in Town and Country Magazine's listing of outstanding medical specialists in the United States.

"Dr. Sorrell's patients provide the real testament to his success as a physician," Russell said. "They have sought not only his medical expertise, but his warm and compassionate care and concern for them and their families."

As an educator, Dr. Sorrell is both teacher and mentor. "He is truly committed to helping young people who want to have a career in science," Russell said. "A number of his students – residents, fellows, graduate students and undergraduate students – have gone on to publish and have successful careers in research and medicine."

Dr. Sorrell has received numerous teaching honors throughout his career including being voted Outstanding Teaching Resident at UNMC (1967-68), the Academic Career Development Award from the National Institute of Arthritis, Metabolism and Digestive Disease (1972-1976), the Dean's Award for Outstanding Contributions to the UNMC College of Medicine (1997), and Distinguished Professor of the Centennial (2003).

What others are saying

In all my years of experience, Dr. Sorrell is among the best, if not the best, academic physicians I've ever known. He is not only a superb doctor, but he demands that everyone around him achieve excellence. He is intolerant of anything else. He has been and still is the bulwark of strength for this medical center. I'd like to have at least a dozen Mike Sorrells on the faculty. *UNMC Chancellor Harold M. Maurer, M.D.*

Over the years, I have been exposed to a variety of wonderful and dedicated doctors. But, none match the qualities of Dr. Michael Sorrell. There seems to be no limit to his loyalty to UNMC, his love of caring for patients, his enthusiasm for educating young colleagues, and his drive to advance medical knowledge through research. Mike could aptly be described as the beloved "UNMC Eveready Bunny." *John Gollan, M.D., dean, UNMC College of Medicine*

UNMC has been transformed over the past 20 years. Somehow, we've turned this place into a major research facility and an international referral center. No one person is more responsible for this than Mike Sorrell. *James Armitage, M.D., Joe Shapiro Professor of Medicine and UNMC oncologist*

Dr. Sorrell has been a key player in moving UNMC to "world class" status in several areas. He is an exceptional mentor and steward. He has become a research giant in his field. This recognition is well-deserved. *Bob Bartee, executive assistant to the chancellor*

What do I say about a person who saved my life a couple times? He's an incredible doctor. He's been a powerful influence behind the scenes and had a significant impact on what has happened at the Medical Center. *Mike Yanney, chairman, America First Companies*

I credit Mike Sorrell with being the doctor who saved my life. Through Mike's personal interest and encouragement, my health and life continue to improve daily. In addition, he's certainly one of the top liver experts in the world. We're damn lucky to have him in Nebraska. *Chuck Durham, chairman and CEO, Durham Resources LLC*

He dearly loves the Medical Center. He has poured himself into it. He is just a terrific supporter of Nebraska and everything that goes on inside the four borders of the state. *Mike McGlade, internal medicine*

Mike Sorrell is the consummate medical academician. He is a superb educator, physician, administrator and basic and clinical science investigator who has achieved national and international recognition of his work. We as Nebraskans can be most proud of what he has accomplished within and for this state. *Fred Paustian, M.D., professor emeritus*

Dr. Sorrell is a great physician and colleague and has been a mentor to many. He's been one of the leaders here at the Medical Center for many years. He has truly made a difference. *Rubens Pamies, M.D., vice chancellor for academic affairs*

Dr. Sorrell honored . . .*(continued from page 2)*

He served as president of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (1990-91) and as president of the International Liver Transplant Society (2002). Locally, he was inducted into the Ak-Sar-Ben Court of Honor in 2002.

During his career, Dr. Sorrell served as a consultant for numerous organizations including the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. He has been a visiting professor and invited lecturer at nearly 200 national and international universities, organizations, institutes, symposia and conferences. He has published more than 200 articles in peer reviewed journals and book chapters in a majority of the major medical text books in his specialty. In addition, he has co-authored five medical textbooks.

"Dr. Sorrell embodies those qualities and characteristics that exemplify medical practice as a 'calling' and medical research as a requirement for the best in health care delivery and education," said Harold M. Maurer, M.D., UNMC chancellor. "His impact has been and will continue to be enormous and everlasting."

Dr. Sorrell and his wife, Shirley, have four sons and 10 grandchildren. Shirley also has been dedicated to UNMC, serving as president of the UNMC Faculty Women's Club and as a member of the University Hospital Auxiliary. She also served on the Hattie B. Munroe board of directors for nine years and has been a UNMC docent for more than 15 years.

**Nebraskans for Research***Richard Lombardi, NFR Lobbyist*

I have waited several months to write this column. Since the Legislature is adjourned we can now tell 'the rest of the story'.

Although our victory came early in the year it was not confirmed until the last days of the Legislature.

It was a cold and dark January night when Dr. Irving Weissman arrived at Omaha's Eppley Airfield. The Great Falls, Montana native seemed right at home for our drive to Lincoln. I will always be thankful that circumstances arranged themselves to allow this busy guy a timely opportunity to speak in our State. Dr. Weissman energizes our leaders inside and outside the Legislature. One of our Legislative leaders said that the private meeting he had with Dr. Weissman was the highlight of his political career. His presence here on short notice confirmed that Nebraska is a significant political battleground nationally in the fight to protect medical research.

Nebraskans for Research hit this session running. Within ten days of convening, the Legislature began debating LB 602, the prohibition of human cloning bill. A small committed group of legislators commenced meeting to discuss legislative tactics and divided up visits with their colleagues and arranged their speaking points. They were relentless, focused and stubborn. We owe them a debt of gratitude that I am afraid we will never be able to quite repay. Our organization and this group of legislators bonded and we succeeded in stopping a very bad piece of legislation from becoming law.

Ordinarily we have an institutional ally on these issues; this time we did not. We hope that the time we bought this session can be effectively used to persuade many of the state's institutions to align with us and prevent this travesty of public policy from ever occurring. I think we will look back and see this session as a critical turning point, not only because of the defeat of LB 602, but for the maturity of Nebraskans for Research. You clearly were the citizen leaders on this issue and you became the information resource for legislators. Information is power and your persistence in providing information to the public and its policy makers is the defining ingredient of Nebraskans for Research character.

The next task at hand is the informing of all interested Nebraskans of the positions of candidates for public office on biomedical research issues. Nebraskans for Research needs to create public forums on the Nebraska's economic development successes and opportunities in the burgeoning field of biomedical research. Finally and most importantly Nebraskans for Research need to cultivate our current leaders and seek new Nebraskans who are willing to stand up for the diligent pursuit of bio medical knowledge.

Fortunately, plans are in place for Nebraskans for Research to continue to build on its most recent successes.



findings

The Newsletter of
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Nebraskans for Research Seek to Expand Membership

As NFR continues to educate Nebraskans on medical research, the group is organizing regional receptions to encourage others to become members of the organization. The receptions are being held on the following dates and details will follow through personal invitations. If you are interested in attending any of the listed receptions, or want to organize one in your community, please contact Julie at 402-475-0727.

NFR Reception Schedule

June 30: Lincoln
August: Hastings/Grand Island
September 24: Scottsbluff

MEMBERSHIP

If you are already a member, renew your membership by completing the form below. If you are not yet a member, please join us in protecting the future of medical research in Nebraska!

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