



December 29, 2011

## Division of Urologic Surgery

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*Robotic Surgery*

Kristy Borawski, MD  
*Neurourology, Female Urology*  
*Reconstructive Surgery, Urodynamics*

Timothy P. Bukowski, MD  
*Pediatric Urology*

Culley C. Carson III, MD  
*Prostate Diseases, Stone Disease*  
*Sexual Dysfunction*

Floyd A. Fried, MD  
*Professor Emeritus*

Matthew E. Nielsen, MD  
*Urologic Oncology*  
*Robotic Surgery*

Mathew Raynor, MD  
*Robotic Surgery*  
*Minimally Invasive Surgery*

Richard W. Sutherland, MD  
*Pediatric Urology*

Davis P. Viprakasit, MD  
*Endourology*  
*Laparoscopy/Robotic Surgery*  
*Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia*

Eric M. Wallen, MD  
*Urologic Oncology*  
*Robotic Surgery*

Michael E. Woods, MD  
*Urologic Oncology*  
*Robotic Surgery*

Mary W. Dunn, RN, MSN, OCN, NP-C  
*Nurse Practitioner*

Sue Forloines-Lynn, MSN, RN, ANP-C  
*Nurse Practitioner*

Elizabeth Joran, MSN, FNP-C  
*Nurse Practitioner*

Heather M. Schultz, MSN, RN, FNP-C  
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To the AUA Residents Teaching Award Selection Committee:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of strong support for the nomination of Dr. Eric Wallen for the AUA Residents Committee Teaching Award. I have been under Dr. Wallen's mentorship for the past seven years, spanning my time from a young medical student to my current position as chief resident at UNC. It is very difficult to briefly summarize all aspects of Dr. Wallen's profound influence on the personal and professional development not only of myself, but of a generation of UNC urology residents, but the aim of this heartfelt letter is to provide an adequate portrayal of his exceptional qualifications for this prestigious award.

Dr. Wallen exemplifies the true meaning of a resident educator; he is an approachable role model with sound ethical principles and a talented surgeon who always finds a way to translate our questions into meaningful improvements. He has an inexhaustible base of knowledge which we can always count on, and his willingness to proactively teach is a constant source of admiration. Beyond all of this, few faculty exude the prevailing sense of calm that Dr. Wallen projects; and, consequently, our residents have a natural composure and respect in the operating room, which is constantly admired by the hospital staff.

His qualifications for this award have been particularly evident during administrative transitions in our division over the past year. With the transition to a new Chief, a residency review committee site visit, and the shift to a 3-resident per year program (which he was instrumental in facilitating), he has undertaken his new role as program director with the vigor and diligence of one who has assumed this role for decades. As part of this transition, he has formalized his active engagement of residents through his initiation of regularly scheduled monthly resident meetings to discuss items of interest and concern, actively seeking resident input to ensure the current and future quality of resident education in the program. In addition, he has energetically sought out opportunities to improve the residency education program across the different competencies, demonstrating creative, non-traditional ways to improve our education, and calling on physicians from various disciplines to participate in conferences and other activities.

As a testament to his many years of education and residents' devotion to his teaching abilities, Dr. Wallen has been awarded the UNC Teaching Award five times. Leave it to Dr. Wallen to use this as an example of true generosity by graciously declining future awards in order to allow other educators' recognition. However, this has not stopped residents from nominating him for other awards to repay their debt of gratitude. Affectionately, he has been given the "Steve McQueen" and "King of Cool" nicknames to acknowledge his composed demeanor in even the most frightening of operative situations. He is also known as our "moral compass", with past

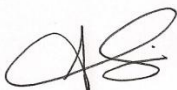
residents going so far as to make “WWWD?” (“What Would Wallen Do?”) bumper stickers. These are just two instances of the professional and ethical example he sets forth as a resident teacher. He is the individual we aspire to emulate, the one who inspires us, and a consummate coach and role model, both in his ethical principles and his operative skills.

To say that the present letter is from myself alone would be untrue: it was written from an outpouring of support from both current residents and alumni. With regard to Dr. Wallen’s recent, unsolicited attempt to increase the interns’ participation in the operating room, David Johnson (PGY-1) attests to Dr. Wallen’s advocacy, in which he “actively seeks out resident input to identify areas in which he can improve resident education from an administrative level.” Ian Udell (PGY-2) notes that Dr. Wallen “takes time to answer questions... in fact, I have never heard him say ‘Just a minute’ or ‘I can’t help right now.’” Patrick Selph (PGY-3) outlines his numerous roles by stating that he “leads conferences, encourages our research, and prods his fellow faculty to be active in our education.” Even alumni credit Dr. Wallen with their current success. Heather Stefaniak (Class of 2008) writes “I find myself thinking ‘What would Dr. Wallen do in this situation?’ on an almost daily basis,” and Aaron Lentz (Class of 2010) attests that Dr. Wallen “is the primary reason I chose to be part of an academic training program, so that I could mentor residents in the same way he mentored me.” There was such an overwhelming response from current and past residents when asked to comment on Dr. Wallen that it would be impossible to include all of their positive statements in such a short letter; these are just a few representative testimonials from residents touched by Dr. Wallen.

As you can see, trying to find a single vignette to encapsulate Dr. Wallen’s exemplary mentorship is impossible. However, I must personally attest to his direct involvement in my decision to pursue a career in academic medicine. As a medical student, I had not considered a profession in urology, let alone academic medicine, until Dr. Wallen took me under his wing, nurtured my natural instincts as a researcher, and provided instrumental guidance in my choice to pursue an academic career. Dr. Wallen has encouraged me, served as a role model, and spurred my professional trajectory to become an educator. Had it not been for Dr. Wallen’s unique contributions to my training, I may not have decided to pursue urology as my specialty, and I can truthfully say that I would consider myself fortunate to become half the educator that he is.

It should come as no surprise that Dr. Wallen, having been nominated for this award three times, has the strongest support from both myself and other UNC residents: I am not the first resident who has written such a glowing letter in support of Dr. Wallen, and I can assure you that I will not be the last. There is no mentor more deserving of this award, and I strongly urge you to consider our program director, our mentor, our role model, and our teacher, Dr. Wallen, for AUA Residents Committee Teacher of the Year. The impact he has had on each resident, whether a fledgling intern or a junior faculty member, has been profound and deserves recognition beyond our own institutional support. Dr. Wallen is already an accomplished educator, and I expect that his reach will only continue to expand, beyond the walls of UNC, as he continues in the next phase of his career. His talents go far beyond traditional resident education, and I believe awards such as the AUA Residents Committee Teacher of the Year can propel these exemplary individuals to affect even greater improvements in resident training at a national level. On behalf of my colleagues and myself, we express our deepest support for your consideration of the nomination of Eric Wallen for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,



Angela Smith (with current & alumni residents)  
PGY-5 Urology Chief Resident