D. MICHAEL NELSON, MD/PHD ’77, HS’81

Distinguished Service Award

D. Michael Nelson, MD/PhD ’77, HS ’81, the Virginia S. Lang Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and vice-chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Washington University School of Medicine, is recognized for his dedication in the classroom and the clinic, his 35 years of service to the department, and his research on human placental function and dysfunction.

As a teacher, Nelson is legendary for his enthusiasm, innovative methods, and encyclopedic knowledge of the literature. He has fostered the careers of more than 350 obstetricians and gynecologists. He has been named Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology Faculty Teacher of the Year four times, received the Resident Teacher of the Year Award four times, and awarded the coveted Samuel R. Goldstein Leadership Award in Medical Student Education.

Nelson directs the Maternal Fetal Transport Unit at Washington University Medical Center where high risk pregnant patients are transferred to our medical center from communities within a 400 square mile region in the midwest. This service allows all communities access to high risk obstetrical care and the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Louis Children’s Hospital.

Many of Nelson’s 145 papers focus on basic research into the cellular function of the human placenta, especially on cells called trophoblasts, which mediate maternal-fetal exchange in pregnancy. His work in dissecting signaling pathways important for human trophoblast function has led to the translational interventions, including pomegranate juice and vitamin D, to enhance function of placentas from women at risk for adverse outcomes.

Nelson is a participant on National Institutes of Health study sections, is a board member for both the Burroughs Wellcome Trust and the National Foundation of the March of Dimes Prematurity Prevention endeavors. He is a fellow of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, received the President’s Distinguished Senior Scientist Award from the Society for Gynecologic Investigation, and was honored with the Outstanding Clinician Award from the Missouri Maternal, Child and Family Health Coalition.

Nelson earned his MD and PhD in 1977 at Washington University School of Medicine, completed his residency in 1981 at Barnes Hospital, and sub-specialty fellowship in maternal-fetal medicine at the Ohio State University in 1983, when he joined the Washington University faculty.

The Washington University Medical Center Alumni Association is pleased to present its Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Nelson.