Q&A with Amy Showen

As she prepares to step into her chief year, Amy Showen reflects on a pivotal stage of her training—one that has shaped not only her surgical skills, but also her approach to leadership, teamwork, and care. Having just completed her PGY-4 year, Amy has taken on new responsibilities as a senior resident and "mini-chief" on the busy Parnassus service, gaining firsthand experience in what it means to lead in high-stakes clinical environments. In this Q&A, she shares memorable moments from the operating room, advice she'd offer those earlier in their journeys, and a glimpse into her life outside the hospital.

What have been your top lessons learned this year?

I recently completed my PGY-4 year, which is our first opportunity to lead a resident team, serving as "mini-chief" of our busy Parnassus service and as the senior resident on call. One of my biggest takeaways from this experience has been that surgical leadership is, at its core, about people. Technical skills may get you through a case, and clinical knowledge through the consult list, but emotional intelligence – clear communication, active teamwork, empathy, and gratitude – is what defines the culture of a service. I'm grateful to work alongside such talented and kind colleagues, and as I step into my upcoming chief year, I hope to focus on fostering an environment where every member of the team feels supported and empowered to do their best work.

Could you share a memorable case or clinic moment that's stayed with you (keeping patient details general)?

I've been in a few especially challenging cases recently where my attendings – accomplished experts in the field themselves – have called in their own mentors for input. Suddenly, you find yourself at the OR table with three or four legends in urology (classic UCSF!), each calmly offering ideas and working through complex problems together. Those moments have been incredibly educational – not just technically, but in seeing how even the most experienced urologists collaborate and continue to learn from one another. It's a powerful reminder that the best care stems from humility, collegiality, and a shared commitment to doing what's right for the patient.

What words of advice would you want to share with others earlier in their journey?

One piece of advice would be to nurture your relationships – with the mentors who guide you, co-residents who are on this journey with you, and loved ones who remind you who you are outside of the hospital. These relationships are what make residency both sustainable and meaningful.

The second would be to give yourself, and those around you, grace. Our work is deeply fulfilling but also incredibly hard, and despite our best efforts, bad things will happen. What matters is learning,

accountability, and kindness. Celebrate small wins, ask for help when you need it, and take care of yourself.

What's next after residency - fellowship interests or career plans?

I am excited to be pursuing a career in general urology!

What's one fun fact or outside-the-OR hobby you'd like readers to know about?

Outside of residency, most of my time these days is spent at tea parties, jumping on the bed, or dressing up as dinosaurs with my two-year-old daughter Tegan. My wonderful husband Matt, our four-month-old son Wylie, and our dogs, Ada and Echo, usually join the fun. It's chaos, and I'm endlessly grateful for it.

Any links to recent publications, presentations, or awards we should include?

This year, I'm grateful to have received a Caring Wisely award supporting our work to develop clinical pathways that enhance healthcare value in urologic oncology with Dr. Bowman and Dr. Meng.