Martial arts master

Being an emergency medicine physician for more than 35 years has made Kevin Kilgore, MD, a master of thinking on his feet—a skill that has helped him in the taekwondo ring as well as in the ER. Kilgore holds a sixth-degree black belt and has earned the title of master instructor in the sport.

Becoming a taekwondo master involves intensive training and mastery of increasingly difficult moves and techniques, then demonstrating those skills before high-ranking members of the American Taekwondo Association (ATA). Kilgore is one of 257 people in the world who hold the title, which takes nearly 20 years to achieve.

His participation in the sport started out as an activity to do with his younger son. It has since turned into a passion, Kevin Kilgore says taekwondo helps alleviate the pressures of working in the ER. “Taekwondo has given me this huge outlet. There’s persistence and perseverance, the commitment of seeing something through to the end, and being the best you can be along the way.”
Med students honor choices

University of Minnesota medical students are learning how to talk with their patients about end-of-life wishes.

Starting in June, representatives from Honoring Choices Minnesota (HCM) began speaking to fourth-year students about advance care planning. Karen Peterson, executive director of HCM, says discussions with medical school faculty had been going on for a while. “Every year, they would tell us, this is really great, it’s what med students should be learning, but we don’t have a place for it in the curriculum,” she says. This year, “someone saw a fit” in a palliative care component that was added to the ICU rotation.

Peterson, who often co-present with HCM’s medical director, Kenneth Kephart, MD, says the sessions provide students with an overview of advance care planning: what a health directive is and why it’s important, where to find it in the electronic health record, what to do if a patient doesn’t have one, and why they as future physicians should take the time to read their patients’ directives. They also discuss how to fill out a POLST (Provider Order Set for Life-Sustaining Treatment) form, a doctor’s order to emergency medical personnel and other health care providers indicating a patient’s end-of-life wishes in the case of a medical emergency.

The students then engage in role playing. “They really value this,” Peterson says, adding that today’s medical students truly understand the concept of end of life. “If you listen to Atul Gawande or other big names tell stories about when they were in medical school 20 years ago, they never talked about advance care planning or end of life. It never entered their minds as medical students that they would be asked to do anything other than try to save a person,” Peterson says. “Now, students come into medical school understanding that death is a part of life and not a failure on the part of the physician.”

Peterson says they are also starting to take their message to residency programs and are encouraging both residents and medical students to do their own advance care planning. “Every year in Minnesota, we hear about someone who is in an accident and ends up in a condition where they cannot communicate and are unlikely to regain brain function. That can happen to any one of us at any time,” she says. “If you haven’t told anyone your thoughts on what you want, your family and medical team are left to guess.” – KIM KISER

Honoring Choices Minnesota wants to bring its presentations to residency sites and is looking for physicians to help with them. To get involved or schedule a talk, contact Karen Peterson at kpeterson@metrodoctors.com.

Cross-cultural talks

Honoring Choices Minnesota is offering three new videos aimed at encouraging members of the Latino/Hispanic, Somali and Hmong communities to complete health care directives and share them with their physicians and other health care providers. The scripts, which were developed by health care workers from those communities, aim to communicate the message in a culturally appropriate way. The videos are available digitally or on DVD at honoringchoices.org.