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Children's Mercy Hospital

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Dr. Ahmed Abdelmoity to receive endowed chair

Daily Enews Dec. 13, 2019

Former Children's Mercy CEO continues his commitment to kids, creates endowed chair in neurology



Dr. Ahmed Abdelmoity with donors Rand and Melva O'Donnell, their daughter, Darby, and President/CEO Paul Kempinski.

Every week, leaders in the Neurology Department gather to discuss complex cases in hopes that collaboration will help find answers for kids. But last month, current and former hospital leaders dropped in on the meeting to reveal a surprise: a high distinction to be granted to the division's director.

Former Children's Mercy CEO Rand O'Donnell, PhD, and his wife, Melva, are establishing an endowed chair position that will be awarded to Ahmed Abdelmoity, MD, FAAP, Division Director of Child Neurology, Section Chief of Epilepsy and Neurophysiology.

Dr. O'Donnell led CM for more than 26 years and this will be the couple's third endowed chair gift. Dr. Michael Artman, SVP/Medical Chairman, Department of Pediatrics, honored the impact Dr. O'Donnell and Melva have made on Children's Mercy. "Rand, through his leadership, had taken this sleepy little children's hospital and built it into one of the premier children's hospitals in the country. And he and Melva devoted

several decades of their lives to this, not only through their advocacy and leadership, but through their giving as well.”



Former Children's Mercy CEO Rand O'Donnell and his wife, Melva, present Dr. Abdelmoity with the Melva Dessenko O'Donnell Endowed Chair in Neurology.

The O'Donnells revealed that their connection to neurology is deeply personal. They chose this endowed chair in neurology due to Melva's own battle with epilepsy brought on by a life-threatening car accident she endured as a young adult. For that reason, they are naming the position the Melva Dessenko O'Donnell Endowed Chair in Neurology. Melva said, "We knew in the back of our minds that this is what we wanted to do some day, and we are blessed to actually have the opportunity to do it."

"This is a huge honor and I really thank everybody, my family and my extended family and each and every one standing here for the support and believing in some of my crazy ideas," Dr. Abdelmoity said. "Nothing happens in a vacuum. I was very very honored and fortunate to be part of this family here under Rand's leadership, Mike's, Paul's, everyone in this room and people who might not even be here who have supported and made this center what it is today."

In addition to his Division Director and Section Chief roles, Dr. Abdelmoity serves as a professor of Pediatric Neurology at UMKC. He is a lead researcher in using the ketogenic diet to reduce seizures in patients. Children's Mercy patients have fared better than national averages, with ketogenic diet patients seeing a 72 percent improvement after one year, and 90 percent after two years. The Comprehensive Epilepsy Center at Children's Mercy is a Level IV center which is recognized by the National Association of Epilepsy Centers.

Endowed chairs help the hospital recruit and retain the best talent as well as elevate our academic profile as a leader in clinical care and research.

Current hospital CEO Paul Kempinski added that the creation of this chair will help elevate Children's Mercy for generations.

"I see this as a snowball rolling downhill, because we continue to cultivate a faculty here whose clinical care, research and leadership will continue to inspire more support of endowed chairs and the O'Donnell's are the role models for that," Paul said.

Dr. Abdelmoity will become our 31st endowed chair at Children's Mercy. There will be a formal investiture ceremony in the spring.



Dr. Michael Artman (right) addresses the audience during the surprise announcement of the endowed chair.