

The Mentor Award was established in 1992 by the Research Foundation of ASCRS. The Young Researchers' Committee of the Research Foundation selects the recipient of the award with final approval by the Research Foundation Board of Trustees. This prestigious award is given every other year. The award is given to a surgeon who has made an exceptional contribution in mentoring residents/colleagues and has shown a commitment to academic/clinical excellence as well as nurturing the careers of junior colleagues to further their career development.



**Dr. Julio Garcia-Aguilar**  
**ASCRS Research Foundation Mentor Award – June 2012**

It is my great honor to have the opportunity to introduce the most recent recipient of the Mentor Award, chosen by the Young Researchers Committee of the ASCRS Research Foundation. Mentors teach, advise and lead by example. Julio personifies all of these traits and thus, is an ideal candidate for this award.

Julio has had a long and circuitous path to his current position as the chief of the colorectal service in the Department of Surgery at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. He was born in Escalona, Spain and left at the age of 9 to attend boarding school. When asked why he has moved around so much in his life, he has often said, "Once I left the village, I was already far from home and it did not matter where I was moving to". As a result, Julio's academic pursuits took him to Madrid, Boston,

Minneapolis, San Francisco, Duarte and now New York City. In each of these places he has established himself as a superior surgeon, researcher, teacher and mentor.

Julio completed his MD and PhD at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid. However, prior to the completion of his PhD, he went to Beth Israel Hospital in Boston to do research and subsequently, after completing his degree, he went back to complete another surgical residency there. He worked closely with Dr. William Silen who was an important mentor to him. He went on to the University of Minnesota to complete his colorectal fellowship and then returned to Spain. Once again, he was lured back to the United States by another mentor, Dr. David Rothenberger. He was at the University of Minnesota for six years and then the University of California, San Francisco for another six years and mentored numerous surgical residents, colorectal fellows and international trainees who came to work with him. He is inspiring in his curiosity, determination, and intellect. He has an inquisitive mind and never settles for what is considered to be standard. He continually questions why certain practices exist and then proceeds to answer those difficult questions through both clinical and translational basic science research. He is a recognized expert on the treatment of rectal cancer that is corroborated by his authorship of over a hundred publications and invitations to give lectures around the world. However, he has also brought forth young students and residents who have looked to follow in his footsteps; and many have won awards for presentations of research directed by him.

Julio is also a mentor to residents, young faculty and fellow colleagues in the clinical arena. He has an excellent rapport with patients and takes on difficult cases that many surgeons shy away from. His reputation as a surgeon is unparalleled. He has mentored many young faculty to take on the challenge of a complex operation and believe in themselves enough to carry it out. He leads by exemplifying the traditional three tenets of a good surgeon; ability, affability and availability. In addition, he is a continual student, always willing to learn something new that includes new techniques in the laboratory or operating room. This ability to embrace new concepts inspires others to do the same. His willingness to take on new challenges and institutions has also allowed him rebuild, again and again, his practice, his laboratory, and build new sections and departments of colorectal surgery.

Another aspect of his mentoring is manifested by his commitment to the ASCRS. He has worked tirelessly to advance the quality and funding of research through ASCRS by serving as both Secretary and President of the ASCRS Research Foundation. In these positions he has encouraged many surgeons to apply for funding and provided

counseling on creating a fundable grant. He has also been a long standing associate editor for the DCR and was the Co-Editor of the Journal for three years.

In summary, Julio has demonstrated his commitment to strive for excellence in his academic and clinical pursuits and continues to inspire future colorectal surgeons to do the same. On behalf of the Young Researchers Committee of the ASCRS Research Foundation, we are pleased to present the Mentor Award to Dr. Julio Garcia-Aguilar in recognition of his mentoring of young surgeons and advancement of colorectal surgical research and clinical practice.

*Written by: Madhulika Varma, MD*