

APPENDIX A

Citation and Response of the 2013 O. Max Gardner Award Recipient

DR. SAMUEL F. SEARS, JR.

Dr. Samuel F. Sears, Jr., Director of the Health Psychology Program at East Carolina University and Director of the Cardiac Psychology Service at the East Carolina Heart Institute, is recognized for his work with the implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) that represents ground-breaking advancements in the area of applied health psychology. The ICD is a biomedical device implanted to prevent sudden cardiac arrest by use of pacing and high-energy shock to identify and terminate potentially life-threatening heart arrhythmias. The device represents a break-through for technology that has life-saving yet psychologically demanding characteristics for patients and their families.

Born in Orlando, Florida, Dr. Sears was educated at the University of Florida, pursuing his studies in the Department of Clinical and Health Psychology, where he obtained his doctorate in 1995. He then joined the faculty as an assistant professor and later as an associate professor. During his time at the University of Florida, he established the first cardiac psychology laboratory at the University and was awarded the Alumnus of the Year at the University of Florida Department of Clinical and Health Psychology in 2011. Dr. Sears joined East Carolina University in 2005 where he established the nation's only fully integrated clinical, research, and teaching psychology service at the East Carolina Heart Institute.

As more people are diagnosed with heart disease, the medical world anticipates the growing need for expertise in cardiac health psychology. Dr. Sears is the leading expert worldwide on this topic, and his research, teaching, and treatment of patients continues to evolve with the epidemic and to stay ahead of state-of-the-art technology that prolongs life for many patients. Surviving cardiac arrest is an accomplishment, but the process of resuming life after the event can be among the most psychologically challenging tasks in modern medicine. Dr. Sears' work is critical in offsetting the negatives associated with this technology by examining and minimizing the effects on patients and families because of the life-saving but painful, high-energy shock of the ICD that is delivered immediately upon the device's detection of an arrhythmia.

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Excerpts of Dr. Sears' Response

Dr. Sears thanked the members of the Board of Governors and the Gardner family for their support in making this award possible. He referred to the Oliver Max Gardner Award as the academic Heisman Trophy for North Carolina. He remarked that his work was a product of great teams around him that included his colleagues from East Carolina University and the University of Florida, as well as his family. He thanked Dr. Kathleen Row, recently retired Chair of Psychology, who recruited him to East Carolina University. He thanked Dr. Susan McCammon, current chair of the Department of Psychology, Chancellor Ballard and the entire administration, who were unwavering in their support of the health psychology program. He commended his day-to-day team, who are his graduate students, as the people who make him successful. All are constant sources of support.

He remarked that the recognition of the award has allowed him to magnify the challenges of the future – those challenges are technologies that work for people. Successful innovations around medicine and health technology are going to create new challenges for all of us. The University of North Carolina has got to be the place that responds to successful technology with new ideas. The ICD was an amazing invention 35 years ago. Success in cardiology produces challenges that require doctors to teach their patients how to cope with the psychological effects of implantable devices and find new ways to help patients get through their challenges. Successful academia in the future will have to be in the field of interdisciplinary studies to solve the complexity of problems.

In closing, Dr. Sears remarked that he was grateful to East Carolina University for it was a place where he can be on an academic campus with his colleagues in psychology and be on a medical campus with his colleagues in medicine and bridge those two worlds. He was proud to be part of East Carolina University and the entire University.