

John Leventhal, MD

Nomination Letter for John Leventhal, MD

I wish to respectfully submit to you the following testimony in support of the nomination of John M. Leventhal, MD for the Helfer Society Award.

I also have enclosed Dr. Leventhal's voluminous CV to provide you with a summary of his numerous contributions to the field of child abuse pediatrics in his more than thirty years of work in the field.

I am Dr. Leventhal's partner in child abuse pediatrics at Yale and I am the only such partner he has ever had. When I joined the faculty at Yale four years ago, I knew of the work Dr. Leventhal had done and I knew of his reputation as a leader in our field. What I did not know then was the kind of person and mentor Dr. Leventhal is, and to this I will direct my testimony on his behalf.

Although I am Dr. Leventhal's only junior partner, I am far from the only junior (not to mention senior) faculty member or practicing physician who has benefited from Dr. Leventhal's teaching, his guidance, his time and his wisdom. I am struck every year at the Helfer Society meeting not just by how many people Dr. Leventhal knows, but by how many people he has actively mentored and devoted significant amount of time to helping. As Dr. Leventhal's position as a senior member of our field, as a true luminary in child abuse pediatrics, has grown more and more secure, he has only increased the amount of time and energy he devotes to nurturing the careers of other. He is neither threatened nor diminished by the recognition afforded to others he has mentored and tirelessly advocates for such recognition to be bestowed. As much as he continues to achieve, Dr. Leventhal works hard to foster the achievement of those around him with no other reward but whatever satisfaction he receives from doing so.

Another particular quality that distinguishes Dr. Leventhal is his ability to listen. When I have an idea to run by him for a research project, or wish to discuss a case, he listens without interrupting and actively, as evidenced by the razor sharp comments and questions that come when, and only when, I have finished. I am not sure how many other luminaries recognize how important this skill is: to be fully heard and understood before suggestions and questions come allows the speaker to express and refine an idea before handing it over for scrutiny, often to the betterment of the speaker's own understanding. Dr. Leventhal listens. For me, and for many others, I am certain this is a key reason that we seek his guidance and mentorship.

Not only does Dr. Leventhal listen when he is asked to do so, but he also actively seeks guidance from others, even junior others like me, and makes use of what he hears. He has never stopped trying to learn more, to think of things in a new way. He asks for advice and takes it in, from multiple sources and with regularity. When I first arrived at Yale, essentially untrained, Dr. Leventhal repeatedly told me how wonderful it was to have a partner with whom to talk cases over. At first I thought he was being kind, but I soon realized that he seeks the thoughts and opinions of those around him regularly and because he sees the value in doing so. He has never thought of himself as knowing enough and for this I admire him most deeply.

Dr. Leventhal's accomplishments on paper are staggering and impressive. I ask the Committee to recognize these accomplishments, but also to see in Dr. Leventhal the generous, attentive, and humble man who lies behind the thick CV and to recognize him with the honor of the Helfer Society Award. He so richly deserves it.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Andrea G. Asnes, MD, MSW