

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DOCTOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to award an honorary doctor of science degree to Ignacio V. Ponseti at Fall 2007 Commencement.

Executive Summary: The University of Iowa wishes to recognize Dr. Ponseti for his groundbreaking contributions to the discipline of orthopaedics and his commitment to compassionate care, which have improved the lives of thousands of patients. Although the University of Iowa Policy on Honorary Degrees does not permit the selection of a current university employee as a recipient of an honorary degree, the University made an exception in Dr. Ponseti's case. He officially retired in 1984, but he returned to practice a few years later, as his non-surgical method for treating clubfoot gained attention and inquiries increased from parents, pediatricians, and orthopaedic specialists regarding his method. Currently, he conducts clinic for a few hours one day each week and tutors pediatric orthopaedic surgeons and other health care professionals in his method.

Details on Dr. Ponseti's Accomplishments:

- ◆ Dr. Ponseti joined the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery in the College of Medicine at the University of Iowa in 1944, after completing a three-year orthopaedic residency. He conducted clinical work and laboratory research on bone pathology and cartilage and connective tissue in biochemistry. Among the conditions that Dr. Ponseti studied was congenital clubfoot, a condition in which the feet are turned inward and downward, making normal mobility impossible. Clubfoot is one of the most common birth defects in the world.
- ◆ When Dr. Ponseti began his work, clubfoot was treated primarily through invasive foot surgery, often leaving patients with painful, inflexible feet by the time they reached their 20s.
- ◆ In the 1950s, he developed a revolutionary, non-invasive treatment, now known as the Ponseti Method, which involves gentle, manual manipulation of the child's foot and application of casts. The average treatment time is approximately 20 days.
- ◆ Peer-reviewed studies in the United States and around the world show full corrections in more than 95% of the cases. With proper training, the Ponseti Method can be implemented by nurses, physical therapists, midwives, and other health care workers in addition to physicians at a cost of about \$100 per patient.

- ◆ In 2006, the American Academy of Pediatrics endorsed the Ponseti Method, stating “development of educational programs for both health care personnel and the public at an international level has the potential to eradicate neglected clubfoot disorder and dramatically improve the quality of life of all children born with this crippling deformity.”
- ◆ Dr. Ponseti established one of the first connective tissue and biochemistry laboratories in the world and the research emerging from his laboratory gave orthopaedics a firm foundation in biology. He has published more than 100 reports on his research in the area of connective tissue, laying the foundation for current research on collagen biochemistry.
- ◆ In April 2007, the Children's Miracle Network awarded its Children's Miracle Achievement Award to Dr. Ponseti in recognition of his contributions to research and to improving the lives of thousands of children born with clubfoot.
- ◆ Dr. Ponseti continues to see patients in his clinic more than six decades after establishing this life-changing treatment. He is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation in the Carver College of Medicine at the University of Iowa.