

Mind & Body

A national lifetime achievement award, an endowed university chair, a rehabilitation facility named in his honor, recognition as citizen of the year in his home town and countless patients positively impacted by the care he and those he has helped educate have provided. It's quite an impressive legacy, and one that semi-retired David Drez Jr., MD, recognized as a leading national expert in the orthopaedic and sports medicine fields, doesn't spend a lot of time thinking or talking about.

Originally from DeQuincy, Dr. Drez is a graduate of the Tulane University School of Medicine. After completing a general surgical and orthopedic residency, he returned to Southwest Louisiana in 1971 to begin private practice, and was one of the original founding members of Center for Orthopaedics in 1994. He retired from full-time practice in 2013, but continues to do part-time consultations to stay active in the field that he loves.

He served as a clinical professor of orthopaedics at LSU School of Medicine in New Orleans for 30 years. In recognition of his contributions to the education of orthopedists, the LSU School of Medicine created the "Dr. David Drez Chair in Orthopedic Sports Medicine."

Dr. Drez served as head team physician at McNeese State University for 37 years and was inducted into the McNeese State University Athletic Hall of Fame. In further appreciation of the countless hours he donated to the university

Dr. Drez receiving the NATA lifetime achievement award in June.

first person

with **Dr. David Drez Jr.**

by Kristy Como Armand

throughout his career, the rehabilitation area of the university's Sports Medicine Center was also named the "David Drez, Jr., MD Rehabilitation Facility."

Dr. Drez has published a large body of research that focuses primarily on athletic injuries and their prevention and treatment options – particularly injuries of the knee and shoulder. He is the co-author of Orthopedic Sports Medicine, a highly acclaimed guidebook for sports medicine physicians, physical therapists and athletic trainers; and was co-editor of Operative Techniques in Sports Medicine.

In June of this year, Dr. Drez received the Jack Weakley Award of Distinction from the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), which is given to honor one individual each year for a lifetime of outstanding contributions that directly impact health care in athletics, athletic training, or sports medicine, and are of major and lasting importance.

Thrive recently spoke to Dr. Drez about his career and accomplishments.

What influenced you to become a physician?

That's all I ever wanted to be. My dad, David Drez Sr., was a general practice physician, and my mom, Hester Bingham Drez, was a registered nurse. Growing up with my parents, health care was all I knew. My dad opened the original hospital in DeQuincy when I was a boy. I remember living for a time in some rooms above the hospital. Healthcare literally provided the backdrop for my childhood.

How did you choose the specialty of orthopaedics and sports medicine?

That began in high school, when I played football for coaches Jack Doland and Johnny Buck. They really had a profound influence on me. Even as a kid, I had a tremendous amount of respect for them and what they did. I realized then that I wanted to work around, and with, people like

them. When I became involved with McNeese athletics in 1973, soon after I started my practice, I was further influenced by very talented trainers there, the late Doc Fontenot and Jim Murphy.

What are some of the biggest changes you've seen in your medical career – good or bad?

I don't think there is anything bad; it is just different. A lot more documentation and gathering of information is required now, and physicians spend a great deal more time satisfying the demands of insurers and the government. There have been tremendous advances in technology that have greatly improved diagnostic and treatment methods.

What did it mean to you to receive the Jack Weakley Award of Distinction?

That is hard to express, other than to say it was a great, unexpected honor to be recognized by NATA for whatever they felt I had contributed to the care of athletes, which has always been a big focus of my career.

Even though you still spend some time working, what do you enjoy doing the most outside of work?

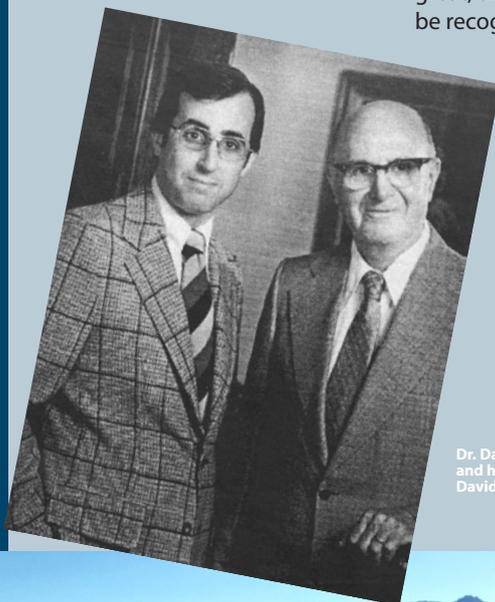
Spending time with my family, watching our children and grandchildren become responsible adults. I also really enjoy fly fishing because it is a little like orthopaedics in that there is always more to learn and skills to improve upon.

Looking back on your career, what accomplishment means the most to you?

That's easy – my family and my faith. My marriage of nearly 60 years, my three children and their spouses, my eight grandchildren. They are more important to me than anything else I could ever hope to achieve.

What's next for you?

Whatever God has in store! I'll continue to serve in an advisory capacity at Center for Orthopaedics as long as they will tolerate me. I certainly don't want to give up working yet. Two sayings have guided me throughout my career. My dad always said that "Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration." I don't want to lose that. Another saying that continues to guide me is from one of my professors: "If you are green, you are growing, but if you are ripe, you are next to rotten." I certainly don't want to be rotten; I want to keep growing and contributing.



Dr. David Drez, Jr. and his father, Dr. David Drez, Sr.

Dr. Drez on a fishing trip in Montana with friends and his oldest grandson.

