

# BRITTANI (BOEHLKE) FIECKE 2006

## Tenderness and Compassion in Practice



Brittani (Boehlke) Fiecke 2006 is a physician's assistant at Essentia Health Cancer Center in Fargo, N.D.



Caring for her grandmother and mother during bouts with cancer was something Brittani (Boehlke) Fiecke 2006 considers a privilege. Her family's experience with cancer and her capacity for compassion make her work with oncology patients deeply gratifying. As a physician's assistant working at Essentia Health Cancer Center in Fargo, N.D., Fiecke becomes an intimate part of the families working through the many difficulties facing patients undergoing cancer diagnosis and treatment.

By definition, a physician's assistant practices medicine under the supervision of a physician and provides a wide range of health care services. Fiecke, a true professional, feels deeply for those she treats and considers it a privilege to work with them.

"I form special relationships with the patient and with members of their family," she explains. "You share moments as a confidant and also celebrate milestones with them. It makes the oncology specialty unique."

Her career path started with earning an associate degree in science before transferring to the University of Minnesota Crookston to play basketball for the

Golden Eagles. “I grew up on a dairy farm,” she says. “And, I considered veterinary medicine, but the curriculum I had in Crookston encouraged the exploration of different avenues of medicine.”

For Fiecke, the passion of Associate Professor Brian Dingmann for the sciences was “contagious” and an internship at the Minneapolis Heart Institute and employment at Consultant Internal Medicine helped her prepare for eventual study as a physician’s assistant. “My position at Consultant Internal Medicine, where I worked as a liaison between patients and physicians, allowed me opportunities to gain valuable experience for my future.”

After graduating from the U of M Crookston, Fiecke went to graduate school at the University of South Dakota (USD) in Vermillion. An opportunity to work with Dr. Mark Graham, Jr., at Waverly Hematology Oncology during one of her clinical rotations was where Fiecke says she learned a lot about the patient doctor relationship.

“Dr. Graham demonstrated such care for his patients,” she recalls. “My experience with him had a powerful influence on the way I interact with my patients today. He has such a great feel for the ‘art of medicine’ and in the use of scientific literature. I was fortunate to work with him.”

She moved to North Carolina after graduation from USD to work with Dr. Mark Graham, Jr., at Waverly Hematology Oncology in Cary before returning to North Dakota and the Essentia Health Cancer Center in Fargo.

One of her distinctive roles as a physician’s assistant has been her work in telehealth services. Fiecke was the first oncology provider to use telehealth for patients at Essentia’s Cancer Center outreach location in Fosston, Minnesota; in the near future they plan to expand telehealth services to the Park Rapids and Detroit Lakes communities. The service allows a special subset of select patients to access high quality healthcare while staying close to home.

To care for herself in the demanding role

of working in oncology, Fiecke stays active running and when the opportunity to travel presents itself, she takes advantage of it. “I try to maintain a good balance in my own life so I can be available to my patients when they need me most,” she says.

She places a priority on taking time with those she cares for. Fiecke credits many of the people who she says gave time to her to help her along the way including Dingmann, who was her advisor, and her physician-mentor Dr. Graham to name just two. She says her years of basketball taught her discipline and confidence along with giving her lifelong friends.

“My education at the University of Minnesota Crookston—the faculty, the campus, and the athletic department—are second to none,” she reflects. “I had help often along the way as I took a dream and made it a reality. I owe much to the many people who believed in me throughout my life and in my career.”



Fiecke places a high priority on taking time with those she cares for and the relationships she develops with patients and their families.