Mark H. Swartz, MD, is interested in humanistic patient care, that is, care that treats patients as people who are suffering, and the path his career has followed is oriented to ensuring that medical professionals do just that.

A cardiologist, Dr. Swartz was graduated from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, where he remained for 34 years, teaching cardiology and internal medicine. Among other responsibilities, he developed a course in physical diagnosis, i.e., how to interview patients, how to communicate with them, take histories and perform physical exams. In 1989, Dr. Swartz published the first edition of his Textbook of Physical Diagnosis: History & Examination, which is now in its 7th edition (2014) and is the standard text for teaching the subject in the U.S. It has been translated into 15 languages.

After its publication, the Dean at Mount Sinai asked Dr. Swartz if he would use his interest in humanistic patient care to help develop a four-year curriculum. It was during that undertaking that Dr. Swartz learned about standardized patients (SP): actors who are trained to simulate the signs and symptoms of disease and give feedback about the candidate's skills. In 1991 a funder endowed Mount Sinai in Dr. Swartz’s honor so that the school could establish a center for SP teaching and assessment for all eight NYC medical schools.

Dr. Swartz left Mount Sinai in 2003 to form his own company, C3NY, the Clinical Competence Center of New York, a service organization that works with local medical schools – SUNY Downstate, Albert Einstein, New York Medical College – to provide them with trained standardized patients to help their medical students learn patient assessment and diagnosis. He also trains international medical graduates to prepare for the USMLE Step 2CS exam, an exam for which his research laid the foundation.

He had already been an adjunct faculty member at NYCPM, teaching physical diagnosis here for 10 years. Shortly after he left Mount Sinai, NYCPM President Louis L. Levine asked Dr. Swartz to come to the College full time; he wanted Dr. Swartz to bring more allopathic medicine – pure medical science – to the College.
A first for NYCPM

Because Dr. Swartz brought the concept of standardized patients to NYCPM, the College became the first to use standardized patients in podiatric medicine. The idea was picked up by the National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners and spread nationally in the podiatry world. Standardized patients are now part of the podiatric medicine licensing exam as well as boards in medicine, nursing, and osteopathic medicine.

Currently, Dr. Swartz directs two courses for second-year students at NYCPM: PASS, which provides the skills necessary for history-taking and the performance of a comprehensive physical examination, and Pathophysiology (which he co-directs with Eileen Chusid, PhD), a course that combines pathology with physiology and clinical medicine and that will help prepare students for entry into the clinical years and for successful completion of the National Boards. As Medical Director of FCNY, Dr. Swartz is responsible for medical issues in the Clinic and meets with Clinic Administrator Eunice Ramsey-Parker, DPM, MPH, regularly to stay on top of those issues.

Dr. Swartz has received numerous honors nationally and internationally, including the AAMC/Alpha Omega Alpha Robert J. Glaser Distinguished Teacher Award.

In 1998, Dr. Swartz’s use of standardized patients was given the ultimate honor: an episode of Seinfeld that centered around Kramer’s efforts to become a standardized patient at Mount Sinai!

Dr. Swartz teaching in Taiwan