

Doc Talk



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Based in:

I am currently based in Toronto, Ontario, but I will be moving to Vancouver, British Columbia in 2008.

Special interests:

Pediatrics
Newborn medicine
Pediatric dermatology

Interesting facts:

- I am moving to San Diego for one year of extra training in pediatric dermatology
- I love to make medical students and residents sweat (*i.e.*, I love to teach medical students, especially when I'm on-call)
- I am recently engaged (May 14th)
- I am a hopeless romantic
- I like to Swing dance (note: the dance, not the lifestyle!)
- I am an avid guitar player

Get to know your peers in Doc Talk, CME's new interview department! Join us every month as we talk to physicians across Canada about their careers, their lives and... their quirks.

1. Do you have a life philosophy?

A Hebrew proverb states:

Love the LORD with all your heart and all your soul and with all your strength.

I think that there is so much more to life than just living on this spinning rock in the universe before we fall into oblivion. If this life is all there is (and nothing more), then what a shame—and many things we do are meaningless. But there is more, I'm sure of it. This is what motivates me to give all I can to my patients and to those around me—I do this even if the rewards are not tangible in this life!

2. Who would you get to play you in a movie about your life?

Brad Pitt (because of my dashing good looks...). Or, perhaps Jim Carrey because I'm a bit of a Liar, Liar (*i.e.*, see my initial answer!). In all seriousness, I'd like Tony Chiu Wai Leung to play me in a movie because he's Asian and I think he's a great actor (he is mostly in Asian cinema).

3. What song would you choose as your personal theme song?

Hmmm... that's a bit of a tough one. I'm not sure, but I think I'd choose Mariah Carey's *I'll Be There*. I chose this song partly because that's the kind of selfless love I'd like to give. However, I mostly chose this song because I've been the beneficiary of this kind of love throughout all my life.

4. What is the least enjoyable job you have ever had?

I must say, most of my jobs have been pretty enjoyable. I started working at McDonald's as a teenager and I loved the camaraderie there. I've worked as an administrative assistant, as

an English remedial teacher and in the student residence cafeteria in university (among other things) and I have always had a great time.

There may be times when work seems difficult (usually when the responsibility outstrips the authority I'm given, or my abilities). But, even in these times, it forces me to grow or it teaches me to know my limits and to set my boundaries. I think a hard time for me was when I was a university student coming home to Vancouver in the summers and looking for a summer job. The rejection letters were pretty discouraging. Then again, I got to enjoy the Vancouver beaches!

5. So far, what is your most memorable experience as a doctor?

Just last week, I had a patient give me a high-five and a great big smile. I think that exemplifies the richness of my job! This is one memory from the good times of pediatrics/pediatric dermatology.

However, my most memorable experience occurred about eight to 10 years ago when I was a medical student in Montreal. It was a rough month of in-patient care and I felt that despite my best efforts, I wasn't doing enough for my patients. At times, in medical school, I felt my level of medical skills were not in line with my level of concern and the disconnect was difficult to deal with. Near the end of my rotation, one parent gave me a card thanking me for all the time I spent talking with her about her toddler. She thanked me for simplifying medical language so that she could understand what was happening. That day I realized that although I didn't have the knowledge to make key medical therapeutic decisions (at that time), I was still able to spend time listening to the parents and providing emotional support.



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In the end, this was what touched the family the most. From their thoughtful card, I realized that although my desire was to be a medical student who knew all the right answers, the proper differential diagnosis and had the ability to formulate a well thought-out evidence-based plan of management, what the parents desired and needed was a caring individual with medical knowledge.

6. Do you prefer to sing in the shower or in the car?

Why limit it to those two places? I'll sing anywhere. Car, shower, living room, you name it! Just not with a patient... unless they're asking me to hum the *SpongeBob Square Pants* theme song (Note: before you raise an inquiring eyebrow, remember that I am a pediatrician!).

7. If you could have 15 minutes of fame, what would you be famous for?

I'd love to say that in the future, I'd like to be famous for raising good kids. For now, my claim to fame is an incident that occurred in a major academic hospital about eight to 10 years ago. I was doing a surgery rotation at the time and I got to stitch up a major league NHL player's injury after a minor operation! I was ecstatic (not to breach any confidentiality issue, but he is still in the NHL and was in the playoffs this year. But his team has already been knocked out [I don't think my stitching had anything to do with that, though!] Go Oilers, go!).

8. What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

The best piece of advice I have received during my career came from my parents. It was in the beginning of my residency and I was sleep deprived and overworked. I felt at the end of my ropes and I wanted to quit. I spoke with my parents and I waited to hear them cheer me up and motivate me to get to work the next day. What they said surprised me. Essentially, they said that I didn't have to

go back to work and that I could do anything I wanted. They told me that if I felt that becoming a doctor was not the right path for me, then I should feel free to take time off and decide and that they would support me along the way. But, they also said that they know me very well and that I have all the right stuff to make a great doctor. That really brought things into perspective for me. I no longer felt like I needed to carry the weight of the world (or at least the hospital patients) on my shoulders. Paradoxically, that gave me the strength to go back and take care of my patients with revived energy. I also realized that for my career, I needed to look to myself and to work from where my strengths were and not just from where I saw there was a need. I would have to say that was the best career advice I received.

The best overall advice also came from my parents (which is fitting since I'm in pediatrics and see how valuable the family unit is). Another Hebrew proverb states:

*Two things I ask of you, O LORD;
do not refuse me before I die:*

*Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.*

*Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you
and say, "Who is the LORD?"*

*Or I may become poor and steal,
and so dishonor the name of my God.*

This has been my father's motto since his early adulthood and he has passed this on to me. This is especially pertinent in this day and age with the lure of financial reimbursement in the US and the temptation to creatively bill to maximize revenue. There are also subtle effects of the temptation of money in how much time I spend with patients (especially if it's not reimbursed) and in what procedures I do (or don't do) based on how much I'm paid for them. But keeping this proverb in sight as a figurative lamppost to guide my decisions, reminds me that at the end of the day, it's not making the most money that makes it a good day at work; but rather, it is in the fact that patients are cared for in the manner I deem best for them. This is what really makes a difference in the end.

Stay Tuned...

Join us next month as we *Doc Talk* to **Dr. Joel Kailia** who has a Family Practice in Nelson, British Columbia.

Wanna be interviewed?

If you'd like to talk to our readers or would like to nominate a colleague, feel free to contact us at cme@sta.ca.

You could be the next to *Doc Talk*!