



Motherhood and Medicine

Since the first UCLA female medical doctor graduated in 1956, the number of female graduates has steadily increased. With the current class of 2014 at 47% female, the question arises how do those who decide to juggle motherhood and medicine find success in both areas?

Lucia Carpenter-Dean, M.D. '62

"The ability of a woman in medicine to allow her to both enjoy the miracle of motherhood and to fulfill an altruistic need to help and heal others. With these qualities, I found it very important to be flexible and adaptable to necessary changes in the roles of motherhood, balancing the demands of family with the responsibilities of a medical practice.

Each of us has circumstances that help set our priorities in life. Early in my education, I set my first priority to graduate from medical school. Fortunately, my desire to marry became a reality when in my pre-medical years I met a very special and understanding man who was supportive of my entering the medical profession. We agreed that I would graduate from medical school before marriage and wait to start our family after I had completed one year's rotational internship. I chose to practice part-time at my father's medical office and occasionally filled in for my brother in his. I was close to home at these offices and enjoyed motherhood with my first daughter. At that time, we only needed part-time baby-sitters, since my husband was very willing to keep his schedule flexible to be home. Next, we had our son, followed by the birth of our second daughter.

There is always some compromise involved with working professionally part-time, negotiating time off with your family (which is becoming easier with more women in medicine), and being willing to hire some extra help at home (a Mary Poppins can be very helpful). Soon, the opportunity to practice medicine full-time can be fulfilled.

All my children had opportunities to visit my medical offices and were very interested in understanding my place as a "Dr. Mom." As they matured, each one of them volunteered to do simple jobs at my office and later they were employed by some of my physician friends. They still show appreciation for my ability to balance the nurturing and enjoyment of my family with the practice of medicine, complimenting me as a role model. Now in my retirement years, I have been blessed with six grandchildren to enjoy!"

Eva Ritvo, M.D. '87*

"I have two daughters and being their mother is my greatest joy. Managing the demands of patients and parenthood is filled with unique opportunities. It always amazes me that we spend four years as undergraduates, four years as medical students, and four years as residents before we are trusted to see a patient alone. And yet, we are given babies to take home with precisely no training!

My oldest daughter, Marissa, was born during the fourth year of my psychiatry residency at Cornell. Pregnancy and delivery went smoothly, and she was an absolutely gorgeous baby, which made up for the colic. When Marissa was five months old, we moved to Miami, and I joined the University of Miami department of psychiatry. Within days of arriving, I commented to my sister that I thought

Marissa would be “right-handed.” Anne, also a medical doctor, knew something was wrong. After some preliminary tests, I was told that Marissa “had a hole in her brain and that she may never be intellectually normal.” Specialists at Miami Children’s Hospital diagnosed Marissa with hemiparesis, a form of cerebral palsy. It was the beginning of a very different journey through childhood with many ups and downs--mostly downs in the early years, as Marissa developed epilepsy that ended up being medically intractable and required neurosurgery.

Now, Marissa is successfully completing her first semester at Barry University. We are so grateful to have found a stimulating and nurturing environment for her to attend college. Challenges continue, but we are better-equipped to deal with them. Every year, we host a fundraiser in her honor to raise money for the United Cerebral Palsy Foundation to help other children and families overcome their challenges.”

*Eva Ritvo, M.D., is one of the Mommy MD Guides featured on the Website www.MommyMDGuides.com and is quoted in the book, The Mommy MD Guide to Pregnancy and Birth, by Jennifer Reich.

Ash Davison, M.D.'07



I recently finished my residency in internal medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital. I was pregnant at the end of my second year of residency and had my daughter Lily in February 2010 during my third year. I was able to secure about 14 weeks of maternity leave by saving up vacation, research and elective time.

I'm choosing to work four days a week, so I can spend more time with Lily. Also, this schedule allows me to continue with other projects I'm involved in with multi-media medical education projects and medical writing/reviewing. I'm currently an associate medical director at Medassurant, a health informatics company in Maryland. I will be working part-time in clinical practice, as well. Andy Davison, my husband, works full-time with the FBI in Washington, D.C. He absolutely supports my decision!

I love being a mom, and spending time with my daughter is of the utmost importance to me. I love medicine as well and am in the process of finding the right balance. I work part-time currently and plan to do so for the next few years, so I can be actively involved at home. Getting full-time employment should not be a problem at all--now or in the future.”