



Like Father, Like Son



During MS 2 Winter break Tchekmedyan went on a medical mission to Nigeria with the Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas (ANPA).

Nigerian physician (left) and Tchekmedyan (right).

With his fourth-year rotations underway, Vatche Tchekmedyan, president of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA student council, follows the family tradition of medicine. There are 10 family members who have all contributed to Tchekmedyan's desire to be a doctor; however, the most important influence was his father, Dr. Simon Tchekmedyan, clinical professor of medicine at UCLA and an oncologist.

According to Tchekmedyan, "Growing up, seeing the relationship my father had with his patients was something that I wanted to emulate. He conducts clinical research, which has an impact on the patients in his office, as well as others. Also, despite the fact that he has been a doctor for so many years, he still gets excited about medicine."

"As far as a specialty is concerned, I'm considering hematology/oncology. First of all, I want to be a doctor who treats very ill patients; and second, I want to be a doctor who treats patients who are dealing with difficult, end-of-life issues. For them, it's all the more crucial to have a great doctor, and I want to be that doctor. To be helping people in that way, I believe I would really find meaning and fulfillment in my career beyond that, regardless of what sub-specialty I decide to enter, I want to practice with the mind frame of a generalist. I want to practice medicine with the best sense of the patient as a whole. When approaching a specific problem, I think that the best approach is holistic. Once a person is given a diagnosis of cancer, the oncologist becomes the patient's central doctor. He has to manage not only the cancer, but practice as an internist, as well. It's a sub-specialty that really requires the mind frame of a generalist, as well as the expertise of a specialist."

"I want to be able to mobilize resources to be able to better provide quality care for patients. Possibly in the future, I'd like to explore policy making and institute change at the population level." When asked what advice he would give to incoming medical students on his/her first day of classes, Tchekmedyan said, "Study medicine with patients in mind."

As for the pearls of wisdom Tchekmedyan heard in medical school, he is quick to state, "Just about every faculty member told me to 'Learn as much as you can.' Also Dean Emeritus Gerald S. Levey once said, 'Don't be afraid to take risks.'"