



Matthew Hintz, M.D.

1. Where did you go to medical school? Where was your residency?

I went to medical school at The Ohio State University (OSU) Medical School, Columbus, Ohio. I completed my residency at Grant Medical Center Family Medicine, Columbus.

2. Please describe your current (and past) practice setting/patient population - (i.e. rural, urban office setting; geriatrics, sports medicine, academic medicine, etc.)

I have always practiced in a rural setting in a solo practice. I have a patient population from birth to, at times, over 100-years-old. In addition to my office practice, I enjoy being the medical director of a local nursing home and for a group home for the mentally handicapped.

3. Why did you choose family medicine? Was there a particular event/person that helped you decide to enter family medicine?

I chose family medicine while on my pediatric rotation during medical school. Prior to that rotation, my plans were to be a pediatrician. I thoroughly enjoyed pediatrics, but started to realize that the ability to care for a complete family would be more fulfilling and made more practical sense to me as a physician.

4. While working, what is the best part of your day? Why?

I enjoy each patient encounter the most. Each time I see a patient it is not only an opportunity to improve their health, but also an opportunity to get to know them as people. God has blessed me with great people who I enjoy getting to know on a personal basis. They often give back to me as much as I give to them.

5. What is the most difficult part of your day? Why? How do you deal with it?

I think the most difficult part of the day is paperwork/red tape—the little things that seem to keep me from doing the things that I really enjoy. It has the tendency to frustrate a person and cause one to lose focus on the joys of practicing medicine. I deal with the first by having an amazing office staff. They go above and beyond to handle much of the paperwork for me. I also try to remember that although it is often just busy work, that work can often be equally as important to my patients as time spent face-to-face with them.

6. What do you think is the most important personality trait that a family physician can possess? Why?

I think the most important personality trait is compassion. I think that compassion allows me to treat my patients with care and respect. It also drives me to be a better clinician, because I deeply care about treating the physical needs of my patients.

7. What do you think patients value the most in their physician? Why?

I think it is difficult to state one thing that patients value the most. I would say that at the top of the list would be honesty, straightforwardness and respect for patients and their values. I put these at the top of the list because it has been my experience that patients are not impressed with any doctor I send them to if they do not feel respected and that they have been talked to about their problem in a way they do not understand. Even if the doctor is a brilliant clinician there is distrust that develops between a doctor and patient in those circumstances.

8. What have you learned from your patients?

I have learned a lot about life. I have learned much from watching patients deal with their health both positively and negatively. Positively, I have watched patients deal with tremendously difficult health problems and even impending death with calm and grace, seeing the big picture of their current life in a perspective of eternity. Negatively, I have watched patients consumed with their medical problems to the point of despair and hopelessness. Both are learning opportunities and I hope that I am able to walk with both subsets of patients as they navigate through their illnesses and the affect they have on their lives.

9. What can medical students do right now (other than study) to make themselves become more ready to become family physicians in the future?

The simple answer is study. There is no substitute for knowledge. The more subtle answer is talk to people. Develop people skills. Develop a heart of caring and compassion for all those around you. This will ultimately divide the truly great clinicians from the truly great physicians.

10. What other advice do you have for students who are interested in family medicine? And, for those who are not sure yet?

My only advice would be to know who you are. If you are known as a kind, compassionate, caring person and you enjoy a challenge and hard work you will do great in family medicine. Evaluate your reasons for choosing medicine and family medicine. If you are "others oriented," you will be happy and enjoy a rewarding career. If you are self-focused, I am afraid you will be disappointed with medicine.