



Dana Vallangeon, M.D.

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

I went to medical school at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, from 1992-1996. I then completed my residency at Mt. Carmel Family Practice, Columbus, Ohio, from 1996-1999.

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

I practiced out of residency as an employed physician in a privately owned practice in Sunbury, Ohio, for approximately three years. In 2002, I helped organize and start Lower Lights Christian Health Center which is a grass-root, faith based community health center in Franklinton, Ohio (westside of Columbus), with the mission of providing high quality, whole person care to all who need it regardless of their ability to pay. Forty percent of the patients we see are totally uninsured and 80 percent of our patients are underinsured. The community itself is designated as a medically underserved and health professional shortage area.

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

I went to medical school wanting to go into family medicine. I enjoy all aspects of medicine and love truly getting to know and have long-term relationships with patients and their families. Also, family medicine is the hardest specialty to do and do well. You have to know so much about a broad range of topics, which is constantly challenging. It is never boring!

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

I love seeing patients and interacting with them. I also really enjoy the administrative aspects of managing a community health center and a growing not-for-profit organization. It is truly my passion and calling. Therefore, it is rewarding to know that daily I have the opportunity to make a difference in individuals' lives by improving their health, and, at the same time, on a community level be part of making a difference in the larger issues of poverty and injustice.

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

The hardest parts are dealing with all the insurance and billing issues. As a federally qualified health center, we have a whole level of billing complications beyond a private practice. Keeping AR down and caught up is a constant struggle. Insurance telling you what you can prescribe and what test you can order and the effort of fighting for what you believe your patient really needs are also draining. I try to continue to focus on the real reason why I am in medicine--to serve those who need it most.

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

I believe the most important personality trait a family physician can possess is compassion. To really care about your patients and their families can at times be trying, but this is the one thing that can, over time, truly motivate change for them.

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

I believe patients also value compassion from their physician.

8. What have you learned from your patients?

I have learned so much from my patients, I do not even know where to start with answering this question. I am constantly amazed and inspired by their spirits and determination to persevere in spite of trying circumstances or a poor prognosis.

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

Expose themselves to lots of areas of medicine and in lots of settings. Solving our healthcare crisis in this country will require all physicians to be involved. So, get informed about the issues and when possible see them first hand by being involved in medical care to the "underserved."

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

Family medicine is a great specialty. It allows a lot of flexibility to tailor your practice to areas of personal interest. It is truly never boring and always challenging. I would not want to do anything else in medicine.