



Outstanding Young Alumnus

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My wife Leah and I met during our undergraduate studies at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada. Our extended courtship and engagement included four years of traveling Interstate 90 as I undertook my medical studies at Upstate Medical University while she studied optometry at the New England College of Optometry in Boston. We married shortly after our graduations in June 2000 and promptly moved to New York City, where I started my residency in pediatrics at what was then the Schneider Children's Hospital. After our first child was born in 2003, we began taking annual end-of-summer driving trips back to London, Ontario, to visit her family. These trips continued through my residency and chief residency in New York City, my fellowship and instructorship in pediatric hematology/oncology at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, our move back to New York City, and through my assistant and associate professorships at the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra / Northwell. When the children were young, I drove overnight while the rest of the family slept, and always enjoyed the tranquility of nighttime driving alone with my thoughts.

I relate this story because each year these drives take us on I-81 through Syracuse and directly past Upstate Medical University. Inevitably, as we approach Syracuse, my mind wanders back to the time I spent at Upstate. I reflect with tremendous nostalgia, thinking about the great friendships and relationships that I formed during those



years, and I re-experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the College of Medicine. I can see the equation "P=MD" chalked onto the interior bricking of Weiskotten Hall, smell the formaldehyde and feel the oily sensation of our dissection in the anatomy lab, and experience the rush of apprehension I always felt at the start of a new clinical rotation in my third and fourth years. I also reflect on how each phase of my medical training led to new opportunities, and how prior relationships came back to open new doors.

To say that my experience at Upstate was formative is to understate the impact of those four years. The scientific inquisitiveness, caring, compassion and leadership exhibited by the faculty and staff at Upstate led directly to my pursuit of an academic career. Thanks to the support of the faculty, staff, and my peers, I had success at Upstate, capped by my induction into the Gamma chapter of AQA in my third year. Unbeknownst to me at the time, my induction to AQA would later provide a remarkable experience with a profound impact on my development as a leader in medicine.

Following graduation in 2000, I matched to a three-year residency in pediatrics at Schneider Children's

Hospital. There, I was surrounded by faculty who demonstrated the same influential characteristics that I had benefited from at Upstate. I had the privilege of being mentored by Jeffrey Lipton, MD, PhD, the division chief of pediatric hematology/oncology, as well as Philip Lankowsky, MBChB, MD, ScD, the chair of pediatrics, also a pediatric hematologist/oncologist. Those relationships would also play important roles in my later career development.

After serving a fourth year as chief resident, I matched to a fellowship at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), among the most prestigious children's hospitals in the country. While training at CHOP, I was blessed to be surrounded by medical and scientific leaders in every aspect of pediatric hematology/oncology. I spent countless hours doing my best to absorb the teaching of those giants in the field. After a clinically intense first year of fellowship, I spent three years (two as a fellow and another as an instructor) working in the laboratory of Stephan A. Grupp, MD, PhD, where I was fortunate to be part of the early work on chimeric antigen receptor T cell (CAR) therapy for pediatric acute lymphoblastic leukemia. That work, under Dr. Grupp's mentorship, received a Young Investigator award from the American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology. Although I left CHOP before CAR entered clinical trials, I am proud to have played a small role in the pre-clinical effort for a novel therapy that has dramatically changed how we think about treating childhood cancer. Simultaneous to my work in Grupp's



Fish with his wife, Leah, and three children

laboratory, I gained clinical experience in hematopoietic stem cell transplantation under the tutelage of Nancy Bunin, MD. The combined laboratory and clinical experience at CHOP launched me into the faculty phase of my career, which I began as an instructor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, our family continued to grow during fellowship as our second child, a daughter, was born during my second year. After completion of my training at CHOP, and with the impending birth of our third child, Leah and I decided to move back to New York where my parents and brother's family live. The relationship I established with Dr. Lipton led directly to my return as faculty at the hospital where I completed my residency, now called the Cohen Children's Medical Center (CCMC). There, supported by a career development award from the St. Baldrick's Foundation, I led a team that established and grew a lifelong follow-up program for survivors of childhood cancer, the Survivors Facing Forward program. From its very modest beginnings, the program has grown into a robust clinical program and platform for clinical research that follows over 800 survivors served by two nurse practitioners, a nurse

coordinator, a social worker and myself as the medical director. During the 12 years I have been at CCMC, I have been able to be part of the growth of a new academic medical center anchored by the establishment of an allopathic medical school at Hofstra University in partnership with Northwell Health. I have had the privilege of teaching medical students, residents, and fellows, and have had many opportunities to grow academically. Two highlights stand out in particular. First, in 2015, my relationship with Dr. Lanzkowsky led to him asking me to assume editorship of the sixth edition of a popular textbook in our field, *Lanzkowsky's Manual of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology*. Publishing the sixth edition was a monumental undertaking, and we are now in the midst of preparing the seventh edition, an enterprise encompassing 35 chapters contributed by 66 authors from 28 institutions. Second, in 2017, my chair of pediatrics, Charles Schleien, MD, MBA, nominated me for a Fellow in Leadership award from AQA. At the time I received the award, I had no idea how impactful it would be. I spent a year receiving mentoring from the top leaders in medicine and developing a personal leadership project. That award

provided me with the opportunity to lead the development of a peer-support team, called the HOPES team (Helping Our Peers Endure Stress), in our division of pediatric hematology/oncology. The team is built on a critical incident stress management model and has led to a culture change in our division in terms of how we handle the stress of working together in our intense and high-risk field. Working with the members of the HOPES team has left me humbled by the kindness and generosity of the teammates in our division who give selflessly of themselves to support their peers.

After spending the first 11 years at CCMC serving as the medical director of the survivorship program and running our embryonal tumor program, I am now preparing to embark on a new chapter in my career. I am in the process of transitioning into a leadership role in our Cellular Therapy Program, which represents a closure of the circle started in fellowship with my CART experience. As I prepare for this role, I will be carrying the experiences from my early faculty years, fellowship, residency and medical school with me.

As I look back on what has been accomplished, and look forward to what is to come, I recognize that the entire structure of my career, with all of its successes, failures, joy and pain has been built on the foundation of scientific inquisitiveness, compassion, caring and leadership that was laid at Upstate Medical University.