Q&A with Grace Chen, MD

What are your professional roles and responsibilities?
I am a full time clinician. I see patients on a daily basis in either the outpatient clinic or the inpatient hospital setting. In both settings, I teach medical students, residents, and fellows.

I am also the Associate Chief for the Outpatient Geriatrics Practice and the Clinical Chief in the Division. I work closely with the physicians, administration, and staff to optimize patient care.

In addition to my clinical, teaching, and administrative responsibilities, I also engage in quality improvement and research projects to improve delivery of patient care.

I am grateful and humble for the privilege to be part of people's most vulnerable and intimate life events.

What do you most want people to know about the way you practice medicine?
I am grateful and humble for the privilege to be part of people's most vulnerable and intimate life events. I strive every day to do right by my patients given this privilege.

What led you to become a geriatrician?
I became interested in Geriatrics while doing a required rotation in inpatient Geriatrics during my third year of Internal Medicine residency. I found many of my attending physicians to be wonderful role models of the type of physician I hoped to be. Geriatricians employ a multi-disciplinary approach to an elderly person's health. In an age where medicine has become so specialized, addressing medical conditions in context of one's overall function and psychosocial situation is imperative in helping an older person thrive and live his/her life to the fullest.

What is your philosophy of care?
My philosophy of care is to focus on optimizing a person's quality of life as much as possible in the setting of the person’s health issues and social circumstances, while minimizing unnecessary burden of care.

What have your patients taught you?
One may not have control over how one ages and/or what medical ailments one develops, but one can control how one approaches these challenges and how one treats those around them.
What are the biggest challenges in geriatrics?
One of the biggest challenges is the lack of advanced care planning. Many patients have not thought about or planned for how they wish to live in their later years. Another related challenge is the lack of resources available to meet caregiving needs for those who are unable to afford it.

What is your wish list?
One wish is to have more endowed chairs in the Division to enable the physicians to focus on delivering excellent patient care while pursuing administrative, teaching and/or research excellence without being limited by the source of funding.

Another wish is to have a full-time social worker available in the Geriatrics clinic to meet with patients and families to address their psychosocial needs and how it interfaces with the complicated health system.

What do you wish other people knew about the field of geriatrics?
The field of Geriatrics should not just be practiced by geriatricians, but should be practiced by anyone who cares for an older patient. Health issues in the older person should be addressed in the context of the person's overall health, and not in isolation of the problem itself.

What do you enjoy doing when you are not working?
When I am not working, I enjoy spending time with my husband and 4-year-old son. I always enjoy a good meal.