Q&A with Albert Shieh, MD

Tell us about yourself.
I am an endocrinologist, with a special focus on osteoporosis. My week consists of seeing patients, doing research, and teaching trainees. Most of the patients I see have osteoporosis, or other bone disorders, but many also have general endocrine conditions, such as diabetes. My research focuses on how bone loss during mid-life affects the risk of developing osteoporosis and bone fracture in later life.

What do you enjoy most about being a physician?
The best thing about being a physician is that I am able to wear many different hats. As a clinician, I am able to forge relationships with a wide diversity of patients. As a researcher, I am able to collaborate with other investigators locally and nationally to further our understanding of osteoporosis. Finally as a teacher, I am able to work with medical students, residents and fellows both in the classroom and at the bedside. Being able to do so many different things always keeps things interesting and exciting.

What is your philosophy of care?
My philosophy of care is to provide patients with the information and tools necessary to make informed and individualized decisions about their health care needs. For example, in osteoporosis, there are so many different treatment options. My goal is to provide patients with the most up to date information about the pros and cons of the various options, within the framework of their preferences, so that we can make the best decision for their health.

Tell us about your educational or research activities.
I am actively involved with teaching medical school students, residents, and fellows. Residents and fellows rotate through clinic with me on a weekly basis. I also give lectures on evaluating and treating osteoporosis. My research activities center on understanding how changes to bone health during midlife affects an individual’s risk of developing osteoporosis in later life. My hope is to contribute to work that will allow clinicians to offer patients newer and more effective approaches for preventing osteoporosis.

What is your wish list?
My wish list is to develop a comprehensive osteoporosis program at UCLA that provides state-of-the-art care to patients, engages in cutting-edge research, and helps train the current and next
generation of bone health experts.

What have your patients taught you?
My patients have taught me that medicine is fun. There are very few professions where we can directly affect a person's quality of life and longevity the way we can in medicine. I am very fortunate to be in this profession.

What do you most want people to know about the way you practice medicine?
I believe that practicing medicine is like having an ongoing conversation with you about how to keep you healthy, with a high quality of life, using an individualized approach.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?
Every few years, I set various sports-related goals for myself. Two years ago, my goal was to be able to hit a golf ball at least 300 yards. My current goal is to be able to dunk a basketball (this remains a work in progress!). Another interesting fact about me is that I have performed at Boston's Symphony Hall as well as New York's Carnegie Hall.