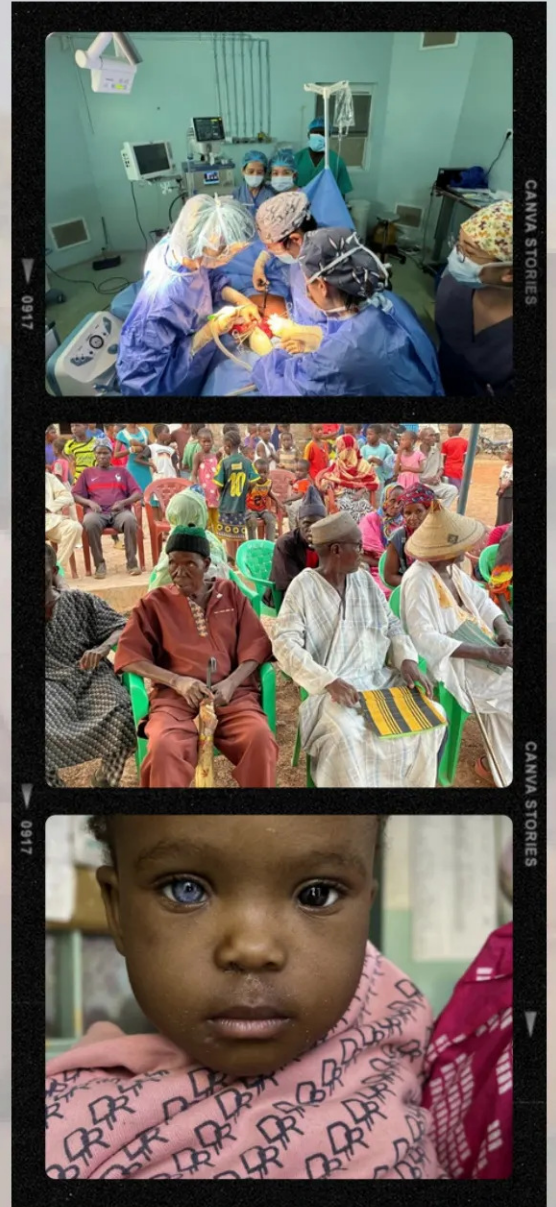




Africa Cries Out 2024 Medical Mission Trip

Interview with Dr. Jun Xu - By Steven Leo

徐俊医生带领的非洲义医行温暖人心



供图：徐俊徐丹等义医成员
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ANACP's Talent

Interview with PM&R physician: Dr. Jun Xu

By Steven Leo

- The following report presents a narrative of the interview conducted with Dr. Jun Xu, a skilled physician. Dr. Xu generously shares insight into his medical journey, private practice, and his development of Africa Cries Out. He also shares vivid anecdotes of his challenges and triumphs. As this report unfolds, readers will gain a deep understanding of Dr. Xu's past as well as life currently.



• Early Influences and Medical Journey

During the early ages of Jun Xu's life, he discovered that he loved literature and had a passion for writing. But, when he was sixteen, 1966-1967, all the colleges in China were shut down for several years. This meant that all the kids who graduated high school had nowhere to go, so all these teenagers were sent to the countryside to work. As a sixteen-year-old, in 1973, he was also sent to work as a farmer. Obviously, Jun Xu did not like this, so when he complained he was labelled as a "counter revolutionary".



He continued working as a farmer until one day, several years later, schools were reopened, allowing kids to take the entrance exams to get into college. However, since Jun Xu was a counter revolutionary, he was initially not allowed to take the test, but after begging the government they finally allowed him to go. So, he took the exam in 1977, but didn't know if he passed because the government didn't report the scores. It wasn't until 1978 that he got the news of his very high score: second highest in his district even after working in the fields for several years. He was looking to get into some of the best colleges in China. Even with a high score, his counter revolutionary title made him unable to go to college that year. The third time he took his college entrance examination in 1979, he was able to get an acceptable score. At this time, he still wanted to be a writer, however since he was a counter revolutionary he attempted other things such as trying to cure and treat people's hearts and brains. That is when he decided to become a doctor.

From there, Jun Xu had two paths that he could take. One was to go learn western medicine, but he chose to learn in a traditional Chinese medicine instead. But to Jun Xu, this Chinese medical school was not good enough, but he didn't care since he got to leave the countryside to become a doctor. That is how he started his medical journey. When he finished his five years of medical school and obtained a Bachelor of Medicine, he completed the three years of graduate school (in Guang Zhou) when he decided to come to the US.



He felt lucky, in terms of being able to come over here, for being accepted by University of Georgia. He stayed in Georgia for a year before transferring to Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, NY. He settled in Einstein to study for a few years, still holding on to his dream about being a doctor, before finally deciding to take the US Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE). Dr. Xu took the test even though he was studying traditional Chinese medicine, so he had little knowledge about western medicine. Still, he studied hard and was able to pass. Afterwards, he went to New York Medical College and became a Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) physician. Dr. Xu finished up by saying: "So medicine is not my preferred specialty, but now I'm very grateful because medicine allows me to support my family and it opened my eyes. So, I can see so many patients, and I can help them."



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Dr. Xu explains in more detail his journey to becoming a PM&R physician in the US. First, he had to take the test (USMLE), step one and step two. Then he went into the residence training which was four years. Dr. Xu stated that the first year was like a preliminary, including medicine and surgery. The next years were centered around specialty training for being PM&R physician. Then he advanced to the USMLE step three before deciding to go to the subsequent stage where he did the board exam. There were two parts of the board exam, he said. The first part is the written exam, which was around 5 hours. After passing the written exam, he went to the second part, the oral/verbal exam. This was where three doctors separately questioned him on "anything" medical wise. Dr. Xu discussed an example of his experience, where the first doctor asked him to talk/tell him about the knee. "So, you have to [I had to] tell the doctor the knee anatomy, physiology, pathology, and the disease and how to treat it." Dr. Xu said. He explained, "This part was hard, because you don't know what to study for." He was able to pass, and thanked God he was able to since he was a foreigner with a bit of language deficiency.

• Challenges and Triumphs

So, one day, when he was in the hospital, he was called for a 400-pound lady. The patient had shortness of breath. Dr. Xu explained, since the lady was 400 pounds, her body struggled to pump the blood around and back to her heart; so, he realized that patient might have a pulmonary embolism. He swiftly told his residents to push her to the ICU (intensive care unit). As they were pushing, Dr. Xu told his residents to check the oxygenation and circulation of her blood, but they were unable to get the machine, so Dr. Xu had to do it manually. As he started with the syringe, he unfortunately punctured his fingers. "The patient's blood touched me so I was very frustrated, but the patient's life is more important," Dr. Xu told me. So, they continued to take her to the ICU and were able to save her for the night. However, the next day the patient still died. Dr. Xu informed me that the biggest challenge is to prioritize the patients and try to save them before anything else. After this incident, Dr. Xu checked the patient's blood for STDs, and the test came back with suspicion that she had HIV. So, again he was very frustrated, but a few years later he checked it again and, thankfully, HIV was not the case for him.

On another occasion, a 55-year-old female came to Dr. Xu with shoulder pain. He checked the patient's range of motion and believed that she had frozen shoulder. As a result, he prescribed some physical therapy sessions, but that had trivial improvement on her range of motion and only increased pain. He injected the patients' shoulder with Cortisone to relieve pain. Dr. Xu mentioned that knowledge of anatomy in a case like this was vital to get the injection in accurately. Due to Dr. Xu's expertise, the patient felt reduced pain and her range of motion was able to return to normal.





The Odyssey of Africa Cries Out

Interview with Dr. Jun Xu - By Steven Leo

The Odyssey of Africa Cries Out

In 2013, Dr. Xu was thinking about going to Africa, and one of his friends who works in internal medicine mentioned to him that his church goes to Africa every year. So, Dr. Xu decided to join his friend's team, and prepared himself mentally and had vaccinations for the trip. Only a couple of months before they were going to leave, Dr. Xu's friend revealed that the trip had been canceled. "You must be kidding," Dr. Xu replied. Fortunately, Dr. Xu's office manager heard about this talk, and told him that her uncle, who was a pastor, went to Africa several years, could bring him along. So, Dr. Xu joined her uncle, Pastor Nelson to Senegal. At the beginning of the trip, Dr. Xu's main goal was to have fun and take some pictures, but at the end of the trip he realized that he could do something about this place in Africa. He could help and change things. So, in 2014, he was reinvited to go back to Senegal and again realized that so many people there needed his help and medical expertise. Pastor Nelson showed him a bit of land (which referred to as the base) they owned over there. Though there was a small clinic and Christian parsonage, it was mostly barren so Pastor Nelson asked him; "What can you do with the land?" Dr. Xu replied: "I don't know, I don't have money, I don't have anything, but I think the most important thing is to build up school." He followed up with a sagacious idiom; "We teach them how to fish, not give them fish." As he formulated a plan, he recognized that he himself could not single-handedly build up a school, so he went back to the US and set up a foundation to raise money. That is how Dr. Xu established the non-profit organization we know as Africa Cries Out. Dr. Xu was then able to sign a contract with a contractor and build up a school in Africa.

Dr. Xu is a firm Christian, so he said that God was guiding him, helping him, and giving him inspiration. Ever since 2013, he never truly lacked money and prayed to God, who "always managed to find somebody to donate to us." He believed that God gave him a lot of guidance and support as he continued helping in Africa. Many people were willing to volunteer, and a portion happened to be medical professionals as well. There were also plenty of donors, and volunteers that really help him in Senegal.



Dr. Xu discusses his inspiration and motivation: he was still a counter revolutionary when he got to medical school. But he met so many people who were willing to help him get rid of that title, which was a long and arduous process. So, he was very thankful for all those who helped him. Dr. Xu continued saying; "God gave me so much, so I have to return it." So, when he saw all the poverty in Senegal (and in Africa), he knew he could use his "knowledge and network to help." That is why he is motivated; the many people who need his help and that he believes it is God's calling to him. A lot of friends helped him. "I don't spend much time because I rely on my friends, my Christian brothers and sisters." Dr. Xu says that the work is not for himself, but for God; It is to pay his respect to God and every joins him for this noble cause.

Dr. Xu has two goals for Africa Cries Out: one is to build a large school/college and the other is a hospital. Currently, he has about 50 students graduate from the trade school every year. He hopes to turn this small school into a big college by using up all the land they have. Talking about the other goal, Dr. Xu would like to build the most advanced hospital in Senegal. He knows that God will give him a hand, so he believes these goals seem very possible.

Some of the more notable achievements of ACO, is the construction of the school over in Senegal from scratch. The second is the medical mission, where for many years it was only himself (one physician) working day and night. But now, Africa Cries out has had over 35 physicians and have seen over 2000 patients from various villages in Senegal from the most recent medical trip. Not only this, ACO also has a surgical team (all volunteers), who performed surgery for 19 different cases. Not to mention, there was a dentist with ACO who pulled over 200 teeth. So, Dr. Xu articulates, Africa Cries Out has had quite a few notable achievements.



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- Exploring Dr. Xu's Private Practice

Dr. Xu has a private practice, with respectful employees who are all Christian. He puts a lot of trust in his employees; "They take care of everything; so, I don't spend much time on my practice, so I can spend more time for Africa Cries Out." His practice resides in a very affluent town called Greenwich (GREN-itch) in Connecticut; so many of his patients are very well connected. For example, one of his patients was a board director for Direct Relief (a large medicinal non-profit organization) which helped supply Dr. Xu with many of the medicines that were brought to Africa. With this connection, Dr. Xu can get \$500 - \$600,000 worth of medicine to bring to Africa each year. Dr. Xu is also connected to another organization, Americares, who donates medicine. These are just a few connections that he was able to establish with his practice.

This private practice was not always like this; he started from nothing with a small office in Greenwich. As he started to build it up, many people also came to help him. One of these people is his wife, a licensed acupuncturist who works at his practice for a shocking 2 days a week. At his private practice, he also practices as PM&R physician and acupuncturist. He says that there are not a lot of emergencies, and he does not have to take care of the patient so if something does happen, he can just give a phone call. So overall, the lifestyle as a PM&R physician is comfortable, and Dr. Xu is grateful for his employees. "I treat them nicely, I give them a good salary, and everybody works very hard," Dr. Xu told me. "This is why I am very lucky."

- A Dive Into Dr. Jun Xu's Life Beyond Medicine

As he talked about earlier, one of his hobbies is writing. So far, he has published three books, with two discussing acupuncture and medicine (Written in English). The other, however, is a historical fiction which was written in Chinese (he later also translated it into English). Other than writing, another one of his interests is photography. This year, on the Africa medical trip for Africa Cries out, he invited a small film crew that was internationally famous and was able to communicate with them well as he utilizes photography 'lingo'. He also mentioned another hobby, which should be obvious by now: going to Africa.

In terms of balancing personal and professional life, Dr. Xu believes he does it well. "For example, Africa Cries Out. There is so much to do, but I do not feel stressed. I just do it. Simply do it," Dr. Xu told me. Once again, he mentions that he knows people (friends) and God will help him out, so he does not stress. Another piece of evidence that really shows how well he balances his life: he used to work 4 days a week, but now only 3. So, he has plenty of time for other activities. He disclosed that he was currently writing another book titled: "The Migraines".



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- Conclusion

Dr. Xu decided to end this interview with some advice. "Study hard... So, a lot of the time, it is very hard to continue and stick to one goal. Because when you go to the college you might see a lot of different directions and many different temptations, but if you stick to your goal, you will be successful. That is my advice to you." "Just believe in God will guide you, and never, never quit, never stop to pursue your goal. Never stop pursuing and work hard."

To conclude this interview narrative, let us carry Dr. Xu's wisdom; embracing the lessons learned and drawing inspiration from his journey.

