

Interview with Optometrist Dr. Yaqun Bao



By Curtis Cheng,
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ANACP Youth Columnists

Dr. Bao was born in Xiamen, China. Originally, she wanted to do research from a young age because both of her parents were researchers so she wanted to follow in their footsteps. Dr. Bao attended Xiamen University in China and she was doing research in a master's program studying cell biology.



I asked her about her story of moving to the U.S. and her reason why.

“Just be aware that life is not a straight line, it’s not that easy.” Some points will feel meaningful and other points will feel meaningless. So you just have to constantly wiggle around to find your path.”

This is the powerful advice that Dr. Bao gave me on how to succeed in life.

Dr. Bao’s family encouraged her to move to the U.S. to explore the world more. They felt that she would seek a better life in the U.S. while she pursued research. Dr. Bao followed this advice, moving to the U.S. in 1989 when she was 24.

She owns one private practice called Eagle Eye Center in Sugar Land, Texas.

She continued her research in a biology lab studying molecular biology for her undergrad and she received her master’s degree in biology. Later on, she did her PhD program in genetics and molecular biology.



Halfway through, Dr. Bao left the program because she had her first baby. This led her to rethink things over and made her realize she wanted to switch careers. She knew that she had excellent communication skills and clear articulation with people; skills that moved her away from research into the medical field.

Dr. Bao considers the business aspect of her practice as not her “strong suit” such as when she has to manage her office and manage her staff. She says that being a doctor suits her better.

Dr. Bao also emphasized that the results you want only come with persistent effort and work.

She learned this through her struggles and her triumphs and inspired me to learn more about the difficulties that she pushed through on her journey through life.

This was the start of her journey to becoming a doctor.

Dr. Bao told me that she felt confident in her skills and abilities as a doctor through her strong academic background, along with her communication and articulation skills. She excelled in studying and learning about optics, which introduced her to the field of optometry.

I was curious about the biggest challenges that Dr. Bao had to face in the U.S.

One of the biggest challenges that Dr. Bao noted was that she faced a heavy financial burden as a graduate student since she did not have a stable job when she arrived in the U.S.

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She even recalled that studying for optometry was easier compared to the constant struggles of the financial burden that she faced. Nonetheless, Dr. Bao worked hard because she knew that becoming a doctor would end her financial struggles, providing her with a well-paying stable job.

I also learned that Dr. Bao loved and treasured her children and was proud of them. She recalled that she believed being a doctor was easier for her compared to raising three kids at once. Nevertheless, it was worth it for her as she watched her children grow and aspire to be even more successful than she was as she said.

Dr. Bao also gave me extremely helpful advice. I recall that she gave me tips about perseverance, the importance of communication, and how meeting more people whether old or young will help me on my journey through life.



Dr. Bao's graduation with her kids

“I cannot emphasize enough how important *communication* is and so for young people to be able to carry on conversations with older people, that will be very beneficial for you.”

Balance: A Medical Student and a Mom.

“When I graduated and walked the stage, I had my three little kids aged 4, 5, and 7 with me.”

Balancing her life as a mom and in school for optometry, Dr. Bao recalled that this was also tough to push through as she not only had to raise one but three children. She considered this as “equally hard” or sometimes even harder than the financial burden that she faced coming to the U.S.

She recalled the psychological burden that accompanied her throughout her medical training and after graduation as a doctor made it really difficult for her to maintain the balance. Sometimes she wanted to even quit her job for her children but both her husband and her inner drive helped her push through the constant struggles.

Dr. Bao demonstrated grit and motivation to succeed as both a mom and a doctor, recalling, “That also comes sometimes with guilt, like when I would have to push my kids to daycare and to turn around to run to work while they were crying behind me.” She also said that she worked hard to make her kids and herself proud.

In the end, I learned many interesting things about her life, her journey to the U.S., her triumphs, her struggles, her motivation, her career, and her wisdom. She encouraged me to find my passion and to never give up. Thank you, Dr. Bao.

About the Author: Curtis Cheng

8th grader at Explorer Middle School. Loves to run in track, do robotics, hang out with friends, read, play games, play football, and enjoy life.

Interested in becoming a doctor.

