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## Interview with Dr. JC Shen

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Dr. Shen was born 1964 in Harbin, China. He told me about how he spent most of his time studying for his dream of becoming a mechanical engineer.

However, in the last two years of high school, his mother was diagnosed with gastric cancer. It “changed [his] life’s path, and made [him] think that maybe medicine was the right path” to take. In 1981, Dr. Shen was enrolled in Beijing Medical University, where he earned his degree and spent the next six years.



Dr. Shen eventually came to the USA in 1995, where he took up a place in the Houston Cancer Research Center. After a difficult search, he eventually started a residency in Louisiana for urology. In 2002, Dr. Shen graduated and moved to California, where he has spent the past 22 years working as an anesthesiologist.

When I asked him about his choice in anesthesiology, Dr. Shen provided a metaphor describing the process of his work. “Like a plane ride,” he tells me. “Some people are very worried with what can go wrong on the flight. It’s the job of the anesthesiologist to comfort the patient and provide trust that the operation will go smoothly and that they are in good hands.”



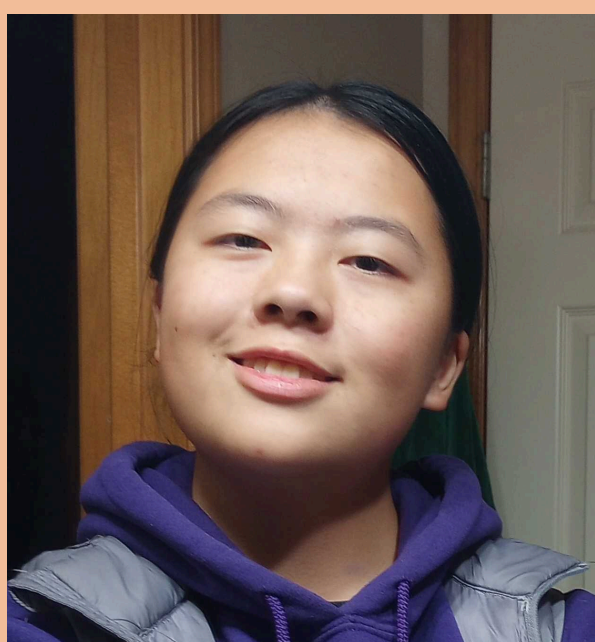
Dr. Shen shared with me his personal favorite part of his job: having a patient wake up safely with a job well done.

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I was curious as to whether Dr. Shen ever felt like studying medicine was too challenging. “It was very hard.” He tells me immediately. There were many topics to study for many years, and many tests. “But I thought it was okay. Learning is a joy.” The real challenge, he revealed, was applying the knowledge. “No two patients are the same. This is real life, the real thing. You have to keep learning.”

When I asked for any advice for students, he gave me two points. “Work hard. Don’t complain. You chose it- own it!” His reasoning was that if you were willing to chose medicine as a career, you should know the difficulties that came with it. His second choice as to what doctors should have is empathy. “Some treatments may have limits, but empathy has no limit. You can always learn more skills, but you can’t learn empathy.”

In the last part of our time together, I asked about his hobbies. Dr. Shen revealed that not only has he picked up pickleball, he has also taken to ballroom dancing with his wife.



## Youth Columnist

Jessica Pan is a high school sophomore in Washington state. She enjoys playing jazz and concert music on baritone saxophone and flute. She looks forward to pursuing a career in medicine.