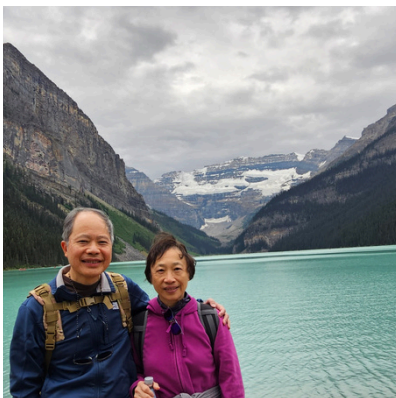

INTERVIEW WITH DR. WEI-HSUNG LIN

BACKGROUND

Dr. Wei-Hsung Lin was born in Guangzhou, China in 1963. He earned his medical degree from Sun Yat-Sen University of Medical Science and was trained in surgery in China for four years. Due to the restrictions imposed by the Chinese government at the time, he was assigned a specific hospital for his residency. This lack of freedom played a significant role in his decision to pursue a career in the US. Since 2011, he has been employed by Kadlec Regional Medical Center, practicing internal medicine and primary care in an outpatient setting.



As someone who plans to pursue a career in medicine, I asked him how he decided to become a doctor. He explained that he grew up during China's Cultural Revolution, a time when academics was not encouraged. As a result, he had no academic role models and was unsure of what he wanted to do. However, his father, who was frequently ill during his childhood, encouraged him to study medicine because he wanted a doctor in the family. Although it wasn't his initial interest, he discovered his passion for medicine after completing medical school.



WHY INTERNAL MEDICINE?

I decided to explore his medical journey further by asking why he chose internal medicine over a specialty. In 1987, he came to the US to attend a graduate program in Buffalo, New York, where he earned a PhD in pharmacology. During this program, he conducted research for several years. However, after two years without any worthwhile results, he decided to return to clinical work, where he found his true passion. **“You're presented with a challenge, and you're usually able to see the fruit of your labor”**, he explains. In other words, treating patients allows you to witness their improvement, a reward by itself. I found this truly inspiring, as it is one of the primary reasons why I want to enter the medical field myself. The shift from surgery to internal medicine occurred when he was applying for surgical residency. Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with Hepatitis B, which led to rejection from some programs. He believes that God closed the door on surgery and guided him towards internal medicine training at Duke University, where he also met the love of his life.

BEING A PATIENT

Towards the end of our interview, Dr. Lin briefly mentioned his experience as a cancer patient. I asked him to elaborate on how his experience had influenced his life and perspective.

The Hepatitis B diagnosis that initially shifted his career from surgery to internal medicine resurfaced as a challenge two decades later. In 2019, he was diagnosed with liver cancer. Due to living in a relatively smaller community, he was having difficulty finding a local surgeon to remove the aggressive tumor in his liver. Ultimately, he was able to get the surgery done a month after the diagnosis. Unfortunately, his challenges didn't end there. The night after his surgery, his blood pressure plummeted, and he stopped producing urine. The residents on duty failed to recognize the signs of internal bleeding and didn't think of doing any blood tests. As a result, Dr. Lin endured 15 hours of hemorrhagic shock before it was discovered the next morning.

“Experiences like this was first and foremost spiritual as it was literally a journey through the valley of the shadow of death,” he reflected. At the same time, it served as a powerful reminder of the importance of staying alert as a medical professional. With the repetitive nature of routine tasks and the demands of insurance and regulatory bodies, it can be easy to become careless or even cynical.

Throughout his battle with cancer, his faith in God provided him with the strength and helped him maintain a positive attitude through difficult times. At his final appointment, his oncologist remarked on his unwavering disposition, which played a significant role in his victory over cancer. Having lost a loved one to lung cancer, I found his story incredibly inspirational because it shows the power of resilience and faith overcoming adversity.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD DOCTOR?

Compassion. Curiosity. Humility. These are the three defining characteristics that Dr. Lin thinks make a good doctor. First, compassion involves seeing patients not as numbers or statistics, but rather as human beings—what Dr. Lin describes it as **“having compassion for a person AS a person”**. This compassion should drive us to investigate any unexplained phenomena, highlighting the importance of curiosity. He asserts that if something seems off, it's crucial to seek answers rather than ignore it. **“When something doesn't seem right, it is the doctor's responsibility to find a reason”**, he states. He stresses that leaving things unexplained could quickly lead to a life-or-death situation or cause permanent damage to a patient. Lastly, acknowledge that our knowledge has limitations: the human body is extremely delicate and complex, so our understanding will never be complete, leading to unforeseen outcomes. However, it's vital to learn from these new developments and work through them. As Dr. Lin put it, **“Humility allows us to see issues/complications first from the patient's viewpoint.”**



PERSONAL LIFE

After discussing his career as a doctor, I asked about his personal life and hobbies. Dr. Lin describes himself as a “workaholic to death” type of person: if he isn't working at his job, he's busy with other projects. When his children were young, he was actively involved in their sports activities, from coaching his daughter's soccer team to making video clips for them. After they grew up, he enjoyed traveling with his wife and hopes to do more. He also serves on the medical advisory board for a supplement company, which stimulated him to study more about pre-clinical sciences and complementary medicines. But above all, he values his identity as a Christian, dedicating much of his time to his church by leading worship, teaching Sunday school, and translating literature and songs between English and Chinese.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mary is a high school senior at New Trier Highschool, IL. She enjoys dancing, playing pickleball, and cooking. She is planning on pursuing a career in medicine in the future.
