



MEET DR. VINAY PATEL



It's a good thing Dr. Vinay Patel of Quincy, Illinois was concerned that playing guitar wouldn't be a lucrative enough job to support his family. Otherwise, Illinois would have one less compassionate endocrinologist helping make a difference in people's lives.

Practicing medicine since 2011, initially in internal medicine and pediatrics, Dr. Patel finished his adult endocrinology fellowship in 2013. Both of his brothers are physicians and he believes his family was destined to have careers in medicine, as the whole family always had a desire to help other people.

Dr. Patel became interested in endocrinology because he finds it to be a fascinating field. He finds it fascinating how everything is connected and how one thing affects another in endocrinology, and how you need to be able to put all the different circuits together in order to understand the concept. Another thing that draws him to the specialty is that endocrinology is becoming the main area of obesity medicine and he is passionate about helping with the obesity epidemic.

As a relatively newer specialty, many people outside the specialty don't know much about it. When he talks with his colleagues about their experiences in medical school, they commonly say that endocrinology was the most challenging area of study.

Since beginning his career, one of the biggest shifts Dr.

Patel has seen in medicine is how charting has changed since he was in training and when he started out. He recalls capturing patient information when it was all done with paper charts. Despite that nearly everyone is using electronic health records today, Dr. Patel feels that when records were entered on paper charts, the assessments and plans held more meaningful information. He feels that it now seems more like you are filling in holes just for insurance and billing purposes.

Another thing Dr. Patel has seen change is more people entering the medical field outside of physicians, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants. He's also noticed a significant boom in administrators entering the healthcare field in the last 10 or 20 years. While he's not sure why this is, he notices that healthcare seems to be becoming more and more of a business.

Dr. Patel has also seen technology advancements that are very helpful in treating patients, such as glucose monitors for his diabetes patients and online portals that enable patients to send a message to him at any time, providing better two-way access between doctor and patient. He believes this newer avenue of communication helps improve outcomes. He thinks that technology has really helped diabetes patients and helped take the burden off of patients by preventing them from having to prick their fingers or have to test their blood sugar at all. He believes that finger prick tests will become a thing of the past in a few years.

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There have also been advancements in technology to benefit Dr. Patel's thyroid patients, such as thyroid ultrasounds that provide information on thyroid nodules to help the physician better understand the risks and determine whether a patient needs surgery.

Dr. Patel finds that the main challenge of working in endocrinology today, particularly with his diabetes patients, is the costs of medication. Because most diabetes medications are very costly, for patients who don't have good insurance and can't get medications covered, he has great difficulty getting them the medications they really need. For example, with the cost of insulin going up, there are people out there rationing their insulin rather than using the prescribed amount to make it last longer.

Another challenge he deals with commonly is getting patients onboard with the lifestyle changes they need to make, particularly with his Type 2 diabetes patients. In some cases, it is a matter of financial restrictions because unhealthy choices like fast food are cheaper than healthier options. In other cases, patients just have a hard time getting motivated. They tell him they know what they need to do, they just haven't gotten motivated to do it yet. When he can get them to make those changes, it helps make a bigger impact on getting better outcomes.

Dr. Patel believes that the challenges with getting patients the right medications or resources they need will continue to be a main issue in the future. Also, he sees the growing issue with the cost of healthcare insurance

increasing. He sees more people getting sicker, who are then less able to afford what they need to get healthy.

What Dr. Patel enjoys most about what he does is getting good outcomes for his patients. The greatest reward in his work is to see patients come back to him after treatment and report that they are feeling better. He gets his gratification from the exact thing that led him to go into medicine in the first place—helping people feel better.

Dr. Patel enjoys the personal interactions he has with his patients. As he gets to know his patients better and learns more about their lives, he can help them with not just what medicines to take, but also how they can adjust their lives to get to where they need to be. Having that human connection with his patients helps him do that.

The advice Dr. Patel would give to an intern entering into practice in endocrinology would be to continue learning. He would tell them that just because you finish school and become an attending physician doesn't mean you are finished learning. Because there are continued advancements all the time, Dr. Patel believes you need to read and learn as much as you can while you're an intern but continue even after you complete your training. Never just be status quo; continue to advance along with the field.

Additionally, he believes it's important that interns learn patience and humility and that they are not always right, they can't always fix everything, and sometimes it will



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take a lot to get a patient where they want them to be. Sometimes it requires slow, minor steps and each patient is a little bit different, so they will have to understand that specific patient and their style and how to best help that one patient.

What Dr. Patel finds interesting about participating in market research studies is that he gets to see some newer technologies and medications and advancements that are coming out in the near future. Dr. Patel feels that his participation in these studies helps contribute to improving healthcare because he has the opportunity to share his opinion on what is and isn't working in his experience in his practice. He believes that the input provided in these studies, such as informing that more endocrinologists are using a certain class of medications, can help shift the paradigm of how these conditions are being treated by those who are not specialized in endocrinology.

If Dr. Patel could have a career completely outside of medicine, and playing guitar could pay the bills, he would pursue music. He's written some songs and played a few concerts and would enjoy touring and playing music.

When not busy practicing medicine or playing his guitar, Dr. Patel can be found spending time with his family. He has a two-year-old and a four-year-old at home and they take up most of his free time.