

Chapter Member Spotlight



Name: Candace Gragnani, MD, MPH

Practice location: Preventive Medicine at UCLA

Number of years in practice: 6

After growing up in a farm family in the Central Valley of California, I was a first-generation college student alongside my siblings and studied physiology as an undergrad at UCLA. A change of heart in evaluating my post-undergrad plans led me to pursue medical school. I completed medical school at

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. There, I fell in love with community-based care and working in urban underserved settings. After completing my pediatrics internship and residency training back at UCLA, I decided to complete a fellowship in Preventive Medicine. During that experience, I worked towards building health infrastructure and increasing opportunities for equity in all populations in the community. For the last couple of years, I have continued to transition from a more traditional clinical role to combining my training in medicine and public health. I am passionate about community-based participatory research. I hope to develop partnerships with community-based organizations and academic institutions in Los Angeles to continue to build community health infrastructures and improve health equity. I enjoy working with medical and public health trainees who contribute meaningful expertise and experiences to support education and outreach to marginalized communities.

What do you do before work that sets the tone for your day?

I try to have dance parties in the morning (even just a song or two) to lighten the mood and get ready for whatever the day brings. I double down on this at night if it has been a long day.

What are some challenges or struggles that you face at work?

Bureaucracy and policy can often get in the way of providing not only the best care. Working in a community can waste the time and resources on tasks that do not contribute meaningfully to outcomes or improvements for populations we hope to serve, which can be really disheartening and discouraging.

How do you work through or overcome your challenges or struggles?

I try to contextualize these barriers and remind myself of how lucky I am to have the conversations or sit at the tables where I have the opportunity to be a voice for change. Persistence is key, so I remind myself that changing public health care and policy in the United States is a marathon and not a sprint. Relationships with those with whom I work reminds me of

how many others are also working to overcome these barriers. Celebrating the new friendships and partnerships I have built with community members and organizations in Los Angeles is also a great motivator. I truly feel so lucky to be doing what I do.

After work, what do you do for your own wellness?

I like to garden when I can, and I find the success of my garden correlates to how well the work “marathon” is going at that time. It makes me feel connected to my roots, both literally in coming from generations of farmers but also metaphorically in grounding my view of health and public health within the greater context of the natural world. Also, who doesn’t love to get their hands dirty?

From what/whom does your inspiration or motivation stem?

My family, in so many ways, continues to be my greatest inspiration as well as my motivation. I am also motivated by my hope for a future where everyone has equitable access to what they need to live to their fullest, happiest, and healthiest potential.

Wellness Tip: What is the one thing you would recommend to our readership to do each day to take care of oneself? Make a playlist of your favorite songs of all time and go there when you need a mental break – whether that’s for one song or a whole hour.

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