

Chapter Member Spotlight



Name: Paula Whiteman, MD, FACEP, FAAP

Practice location: Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA

Number of years in practice: 20+ years

My name is Paula Whiteman. For background, I am board certified in Emergency Medicine with subspecialty certification in Pediatric Emergency Medicine.

I am native to southern California, but did my Emergency Medicine residency and Pediatric Emergency Medicine (PEM) fellowship at NYU/Bellevue Medical Center. I returned to Los Angeles and have been here ever since.

I have been actively involved with the AAP for over 20 years, initially involved with the local committee on Pediatric Emergency Medicine (PEM), then as AAP-CA2 member-at-large, VP, president, AAP District IX vice chair, and AAP District IX CFMC representative.

I have written numerous AAP resolutions and have had many in the top ten, including #1s. This year, my resolution on the AAP's position on banned books was voted number 9 and my resolution on Single Dose Antibiotic (Doxy-PEP) to Reduce Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) was #11. On behalf of the AAP District IX, I traveled several times to Sacramento to advocate on pediatric anesthesia safety speaking before the state senate and state assembly as well as the CA dental board. I recommend getting involved with the AAP. I could not have anticipated where my involvement would have led, but it has been very fun and worthwhile.

As the parent of a trans kid, I am very proud of my most recent publication in JACEP open, "[A guide to caring for patients who identify as transgender and gender diverse in the emergency department](#)". As I continue to publish articles in peer reviewed journals, I have risen up the academic ladder to the rank of Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

Recently I was asked to join the board of Starlight Children's Foundation. As my youngest kid is a pediatric cancer survivor, I find this organization very worthwhile bringing happiness to hospitalized children. Please consider donating to [Starlight](#).

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

As an emergency physician, the one thing that I do that sets the tone for my 'work day' no matter what my shift timing, is enjoying a nice latte. I am sure you expected better words of wisdom, but taking a moment to enjoy a cup of coffee can be a mindful experience.

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

One of the main challenges now is that while early on during the beginning of the pandemic, patients and the public thought of us frontline providers as ‘heroes’, now there is a sense of it being okay to not being nice to health care providers for various reasons out of our control that impact the healthcare system. For example, many nurses and physicians have left emergency medicine and medicine, in general, this affects the moral and burnout level of those that are still in practice. Due to lack of healthcare screening during the height of the pandemic, I now diagnose a lot of cancer in the Emergency Department. The misinformation bandwagon blames vaccination, which is not the cause. However, it is difficult to engage in discussion with some in order to counter that misinformation.

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

Helping people is still my ‘ikigai’. Occasionally, there are still those patients that I feel I truly helped and had the opportunity to make a difference in their lives. That feeling makes working worthwhile despite those challenges.

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

For my own wellness, I do a lot of exercise, including long walks and indulge in my creative side, such as arts and crafts. I teach [Gyotaku fish painting](#) and study other types of Asian art, including Chinese Brush Painting and Korean Folk art.

From what/whom does your inspiration or motivation stem?

My inspiration for pediatric medicine comes from my mother, who was an amazing pediatrician. She was a unique, caring individual who made a difference in her patient’s lives. When I ran for DVC, I sent out individual emails to voting members, unexpectedly many people took the time to reply and share memories they had of my mother, so I know she was also an inspiration to many others.

Wellness Tip: What is the one thing you would recommend to our readership to do each day to take care of oneself?

I do practice and teach mindfulness. One easy mindfulness tip is to take a ‘mindful moment’, such as looking for the daytime moon. Look out the window or go outside, gaze up into the sky. See if you can spot the daytime moon. This activity creates a moment of focus to reset the rest of your day regardless of whether or not you get a glance at it.

