

Chapter Member Spotlight



Name: Rajesh Donthi, MD, FAAP

Practice Location: Children's Hospital of Los Angeles,
Division of Hospital Medicine

Number of Years in Practice: 21years

My wife and I moved to LA 11 years ago from Columbus, Ohio, at Nationwide Children's Hospital, where I did my residency, 2 years of Chief residency, and was an Associate Program Director for the categorical Pediatric Residency and Program Director for the Dually-accredited AOA/ABP Osteopathic Pediatric Residency. During my Chief years and after, I gravitated towards Pediatric Hospital Medicine (PHM) before I knew the term "Pediatric Hospitalist" was widely known.

I enjoy PHM because of the knowledge and experience we gain about systems, working with so many different team members and specialties, and the opportunity to integrate the care for patients who are acutely ill and have varying levels of complexity.

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

Following recent bouts of illness, I have restarted my efforts to better manage my stress. I find that getting up early in the morning, when everyone is asleep and things are quiet, is a great way to set the tone for the day with silent contemplation, a bowl of cereal, reading or going for an early morning walk, and/or learning more about and practicing mindfulness, as a way to increase my awareness to create a space for contemplation before reacting.

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

Where to start... these are challenging times with external threats and internal challenges. One challenge we face is supporting a mission to provide the highest quality of care to everyone. Regardless, this mission is under even greater threat and the current environment has given us an opportunity to think about how to do more with less... even though it feels like we've been doing this all along. A perennial struggle is how to find time to make progress on longer-term, prospective needs and projects that are meaningful and energizing, while addressing crises that come up frequently and need immediate attention.

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

None of us are alone and as much as we believe we are the “only one” who is feeling or thinking something, especially negative or self-deprecating thoughts, we are more similar and connected than we realize. I try to keep this in mind. As part of my new journey to manage stress more effectively, I find there is truth in the benefits of finding gratitude, grounding on my values, and being present. Borrowing the term from someone else, I battle the “imposter monster” every day with self-compassion, grace for myself, and accepting that my “best” may look different day-to-day. I accept that I am and will always be a work-in-progress, hopefully progressing toward betterment.

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

If I haven’t had the opportunity for my morning routine, I try to fit in mindfulness into other activities- breathing exercise before leaving work or getting out of the car, grounding while washing my hands or brushing my teeth, remaining present and aware, and enjoying the small moments (which really are big). My future goal to help with my wellness is to find time to regularly reflect on my accomplishments (visible or invisible to others) and opportunities, as I believe this helps frame the past in a productive way and elevates the recall of positive moments, not only mistakes or faults as humans tend to do.

From what/whom does your inspiration or motivation stem?

From multiple sources... my parents, who are some of the hardest working people I know, past and present leaders and mentors with whom I have had the privilege to work, from my colleagues who are dedicated to comprehensive, high-quality and compassionate care of children who often have nowhere else to turn to. From my toddler son and partner who motivate me daily to stay grounded and focused on what is most important, and from our patients and their dedicated caregivers whom we see at some of the toughest times in their lives.

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

Have at least as much or more compassion, grace, and forgiveness for yourself than you do for others. If you are struggling, ask for help - you matter.