

Chapter Member Spotlight



Name: Katelyn Klein, M.D. (She/her)

Practice location: Venice Family Clinic

Number of years in practice: 1

I am from southern California but have called many places home including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Malawi, and Los Angeles. I spent the first part of my career in the medical field working as a nurse. I was an ICU charge nurse, ER nurse, and then worked in a rural region of Malawi for an NGO dedicated to improving care for kids with severe acute malnutrition.

After moving back to the US, I went to medical school at Georgetown in Washington, D.C. and subsequently matched at UCLA for my Internal Medicine-Pediatrics residency. At UCLA, I was privileged to learn under two incredible program directors, the inimitable Dr. Alice Kuo and the brilliant Dr. Gifty-Maria Ntim. There are so many career paths that I found alluring, but upon finishing residency, ultimately decided to start work as a primary care Med-Peds doctor serving some of our county's most vulnerable patients at a missional FQHC, Venice Family Clinic (VFC).

I currently serve as the interim Site Director at VFC's Gardena location. In addition to providing primary care services, I am privileged to sit alongside more senior leaders where we strive to improve care for our patients and staff through ingenuity, compassion, and dedication to bettering the health of our community. I was also honored to receive a faculty appointment as a Clinical Instructor in the Department of Medicine at UCLA, where I am involved in the Med-Peds residency program and help to improve the resident Continuity Clinic experience.

As I embark on my journey as an early career physician, I am grateful for our local AAP chapter and the work being done to advocate for our region's children. Finding ways to elevate the health of marginalized and underserved kids is a driving force behind why I became a pediatrician. I hope that as I settle into my new roles, I'll be able to get more involved in our local chapter and be a bigger part of needed changes in our community. My daily goal is to focus on the patient in front of me and make whatever impact I can on an individual level for these vulnerable kids and families while we continue to address systemic issues that can measurably affect their health in the long run.

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

Mornings in our house with two young children and two full-time working parents can be chaos. Sometimes I feel like I've lived a whole day before I even step out the door to work. In a [usually unsuccessful] attempt to gain control of my morning, I try to get up a few minutes early

every day so that I don't feel completely rushed. I try to be available to eat breakfast with my daughters, play for a couple minutes, and help my partner with their normal morning routine before I leave. I do my best not to think about work at all and instead soak in these precious mundane moments, like crocodile wrestling a baby into a clean diaper and helping a three-year-old get her shoes on the correct feet.

I have a 25-minute drive to clinic every morning. I don't listen to anything but use this as my quiet thinking time since the rest of my life as a PCP, Clinic Director, and mom of young kids often feels like chaos. I also make it my goal to drink a liter of water on the way to work because as every primary care doctor knows there won't be time to drink anything else until lunch (if then) and I'm all about avoiding prerenal AKIs.

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

I'm a new PCP, junior faculty, and serving as a Clinic Director at an FQHC. In my leadership role, I oversee a clinic that provides about 14,000 visits per year. The learning curve has been steep. I'm challenged with many things, including how to navigate staffing shortages without compromising access to care or overworking staff and how to successfully pilot new ideas and workflows in an already established system. I continue to struggle as a PCP with heavy patient loads and time management. Nothing is more likely to put me into a hypertensive crisis than NextGen, our archaic EMR, which will regularly crash and delete notes on busy clinic days.

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

I ask a lot of questions and try to be an available listener. I believe there is a lot I can learn from people in every role in our clinic- other clinicians, PSRs, MAs, nursing staff, clinic management, janitorial staff- and understanding their viewpoints gives me a better perspective on ways we can improve our workflows and policies. I reach out to other doctors when I have a clinical question that I'm pondering. In my perpetual battle with NextGen, I have waived the white flag of surrender and have succumbed to its soul-crushing clutches until it is replaced by Epic at our clinic next year.

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

Lately I find the most restoration and joy in putting away my phone and electronics and trying to be present with my family in both the ordinary and exciting parts of life- watching my 8-month-old laugh with delight every time she takes a bite of something new, going on rock hunts around the neighborhood with my toddler, searching for the best coffee shops in LA with my spouse. Exercise, particularly in the forms of running, soccer, and rock climbing, significantly helps my mental health. I feel free and at peace in the great outdoors, especially up in the mountains. As my escapes to the woods have been very limited lately, I've tried to bring nature to me by purchasing (and subsequently killing) way too many houseplants. Cuddling with my rescue pitbull, who is a permanent fixture on our living room couch, always brings my wellness up a notch, too.

From what/whom does your inspiration or motivation stem?

I first became interested in working in the healthcare field because of my mom, an endlessly kind and brave woman. She was diagnosed with cancer when I was a young kid and died when I was a teenager. I think of her often when I'm seeing patients.

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

Remember that it's ok to say "no."