

Chapter Member Spotlight



Name: Eyal Ben-Isaac, M.D.

Practice location: Children's Hospital Los Angeles

Number of years in practice: 30

I was born in Israel and my family moved to Los Angeles when I was five years old. I have lived in L.A. all my life and attended UCLA for college and medical school. I then went on to do my pediatric residency and chief residency at Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA). I was lucky enough to become the residency program director at CHLA in 1994 and held that role for 25 years. I continue to care for children as a general pediatrician in the AltaMed General Pediatric clinic at CHLA, educate the residents in clinic and co-direct our Education Track for interested housestaff. In addition, I assist with development of CME activity within the hospital, locally and nationally, and now also develop pediatric curricula on an international level.

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

I recite Jewish prayers every morning and remind myself to be thankful and grateful for everything in my life. I have about a one-hour drive to work so I listen to sports talk on the way to help relax. I also try to arrive at work early so I have time to say my hellos to everyone and engage in conversation before I start seeing patients.

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

As physicians we all seem to get pulled in different directions. Trying to satisfy families/patients' wishes, seeing patients in a timely manner, answering emails and calls can all add up to a stressful day.

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

One of my patients once sent me a podcast on stoic philosophy by a philosopher named William Irvine, to which I listen repeatedly. It has taught me many ways to deal with life's ongoing challenges. One of my mottoes is to remember "do what you can with what you have at the time" or as Theodore Roosevelt stated, "Do what you can, With what you've got, Where you are". Meaning, do not judge yourself whether you win or not, or whether you are successful or not. Instead, measure your success based on did you do what you could, with what you had, because that is what matters. I also try to remember that life is essentially transient and fragile, so try to make each experience that much richer.

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

My drive home is typically an hour long, so I like listening to music, sports talk, or comedy acts.

Often, I will go to a sporting event after work whether it be a Dodgers' game, Kings' hockey, or the UCLA Bruins basketball games. If there is still some light out, I love going for a relaxing bike ride.

From what/whom does your inspiration or motivation stem?

My parents have always inspired me to work hard and be the best I can (in all aspects of life). They are both hard-working physicians who dedicated their lives to helping others, educating colleagues, and caring for their children. I feel very blessed that I can see them on a regular basis.

My motivation continues to be the many residents and colleagues with whom I have had the pleasure to work. They have always inspired me to learn more and teach throughout my career.

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

Physicians are well known for taking great care of their patients but not of themselves, even though we know we must do the latter to be successful in taking care of our patients. Try to remember to spend even a few minutes each day taking care of yourself, whether it be taking a walk around the block during lunchtime, walking up and down a stairwell, listening to the daily calm on the Calm app, or whatever else makes you happy. I remember a social worker once provided our group a single sheet of paper entitled "Taking Care of Yourself". The document listed random items (e.g., eat ice cream, go to a movie, get a massage, drum, help somebody else, be with friends, and so much more) which I posted on my refrigerator and make sure I accomplish on a routine basis. Sometimes just the anticipation and looking forward to doing something (e.g., listening to live music) makes all the difference and helps us experience a joyful week.

Contact information: ebenisaac@chla.usc.edu