You might say Dr. Adi Lador is in the rhythm section of the big band that is cardiology. But she took her time getting there, with an assortment of endeavors along the way.

And she’s still at it.

“Life is an adventure and I’m always evolving,” says the 2018-2019 APF Clinical Fellow in cardiac electrophysiology at Houston Methodist Hospital’s DeBakey Heart & Vascular Center. “I’m curious, open-minded and the type of person who takes their time to understand just what they want to do.”

As part of her development as a physician Lador explored, in addition to cardiology, specialties as diverse as: OB-GYN, hematology, gastroenterology, medical grant writing and administration, computer science and internal medicine research before choosing electrophysiology (EP) – the study and treatment of rhythmic disorders of the heart.

In addition to diagnostic testing of the electrical properties of the heart, electrophysiologists use medication and surgical methods to treat many of the rhythm disturbances of the heart. These include antiarrhythmic drug therapy, surgical implantation of pacemakers and defibrillators and catheter-based ablation of lesions in the heart -- scarring or destroying heart tissue to disrupt faulty electrical signals causing the arrhythmia.

Also prior to Houston Methodist -- For different opportunities the Tel Aviv resident’s been out of Israel at Baylor College of Medicine, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and New York University’s Langone Medical Center.

It was at Langone, during her cardiology fellowship at Beilinson-Rabin Medical Center, that she decided on her professional future. “Even at that late date, I still wasn’t sure what I wanted to specialize in. But every year they choose two fellows to each go for a month-long observational rotation abroad. I was chosen and, in turn, chose to go to NYU to see exactly what EP was.

“I chose, once again, to explore the American system. It was an amazing experience! I had the time, without family, just to concentrate on and learn about lots of procedures I’d never seen before or had seen but much less often. And, of course, the volume of procedures was far greater than I’d ever seen. After that month, I knew what I wanted to do as a cardiologist.

“One of the reasons I like this subspecialty so much is because this area of cardiology is rapidly advancing and thus there is so much potential to continuously learn and contribute to its evolution. This ultimately results in improving patient care.

“And I truly enjoy the combination of clinical work, patient contact, research, innovation and the use of physics and technology.”

Lador also has enjoyed Beilinson-Rabin, where she completed all her training after The Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School, and where the 41-year-old will return as an attending electrophysiologist after her two-year Houston fellowship.

The Haifa native joined the IDF Communication Force after high school, managing computer science elements of daily communication in the military such as GPS, encrypted communications, computers and radios. Starting as an instructor, she soon became an officer and finished her service as one of the directors of the officer’s course.

Lador took much from this life to her physician world. “I learned a lot about daily communication with people. I learned how to work 24 hours and 48 hours at a time; that gave me the know-how to have a goal, work toward it and attain it.
“I also got a lot of education about teaching. I think a big part of being a physician is teaching other physicians and students. And I was involved in a lot of physics and technology.”

When Lador was in the military she realized she wanted a different type of contact with people, she wanted to help them by becoming a physician.

“While I don’t have any doctors in my family or any particular person who influenced me in that way, growing up I was always into sports. I was a long-distance runner (She still is -- getting up every day at 5 a.m. to run and competing in marathons! She says it’s her own medicine to keep her balanced in a busy life.) and I think part of that time I was always interested in health issues. I read a lot and always liked sports medicine. It fascinated me – the physiology of it. That definitely had an influence on me.

“I want to explore that more, maybe sports cardiology. Talk about still evolving!”

After her IDF service Lador briefly studied computer science at Technion. Then it was off to medical school where she found she loved cardiology, but still pursued a variety of interests and experiences.

For a year and a half during medical school the Tel Aviv resident was an OB-GYN physician assistant at Hadassah Medical Center. “I was exploring. It was a great combination of skills, procedures and patient contact. I often think, ‘What would have happened if I’d taken that route?’ And I’m certain I’m not the only cardiologist who thinks that.

“For me, however, everything in medicine is fascinating. I knew, though, in medical school cardiology definitely was my favorite. But I was also interested in hematology and gastroenterology.” (While at MD Anderson and Baylor, between internship and residency, she explored hematology, among other areas.)

After returning from the United States Lador continued studies at Rabin. She’d accepted an internal medicine residency there, but first completed a research fellowship in that specialty. “While the research is not what I do now, I really learned the fundamentals from an excellent teacher and participated in many clinical trials.”

WHY RABIN MEDICAL CENTER?
“After my internship I felt I knew the hospital well and all of their internal medicine departments are very good. The director of internal medicine there is as well.”

WHY INTERNAL MEDICINE?
“Internal medicine is the REAL medicine. You learn all the diseases and how to treat the whole patient. It gives you a very good base from which to move. And, of course, it’s where you begin cardiology.”

CARDIOLOGY?
“I knew I wanted to learn all about the heart. Above all else I love cardiology. I love the rush of adrenaline with CPR, helping patients who’ve had heart attacks, seeing their relief after treatment and seeing them getting better. I love getting a solution right now for a problem long-term.

“When I was in Houston the first time, before my internal medicine residency, I spent a few months with a Baylor College of Medicine cardiologist and that was very rewarding.

Lador chose a cardiology rotation during residency and found it fascinating. She made up her mind after meeting the department attendings. Cardiology residency was the next step.

“Also, cardiology at Rabin is one of the biggest and best in Israel. It’s a referral hospital; all the cutting-edge cardiology technology there is in Israel is there.

“I was very happy they accepted me; it was a good home for me and a great place for training.”

IS IT NECESSARY TO LEAVE ISRAEL FOR THIS KIND OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE?
“In my opinion this is the only way, in this field, you can do the amount of procedures and get the kind of exposure to the variety of clinical experiences. The DeBakey Center is world-famous, people come here from all over.
“Here I do between four and eight procedures a day. What I do at Houston Methodist in a week, I might do in a month in Israel.

“And here you see everything, there is no complex case they’re not doing. I just do tons of procedures I couldn’t do training in Israel.

“Technology-wise, in Israel we have a social system with budgets. And this comes with limitations. You cannot necessarily be exposed to all the technology because it’s not at all the hospitals.

“One of the major things here is the cutting-edge technology. It’s all here and it’s part of my life. I use it all the time.

“Also, every month in the U.S. the leaders in the (EP) world gather for courses and conferences and I go. In my lab alone I have the opportunity, daily, to work with leaders in the EP field.”

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE HOUSTON METHODIST?
“Houston Methodist is well established as a world leader in heart and vascular treatments, research and education.

“On my journey I’m also always looking for a good learning environment. Here I can ask my attendings anything and get help. And as I said before, the volume and variety of cases is second to none. That’s the power of the big centers.

“Also, my husband is a fellow in spine surgery at MD Anderson and we wanted an area that offered good situations for both of us. We’d worked in Houston before and liked the city. We have friends here from before.

“It’s a very nice Jewish community and there’s a nice Jewish school for the children.

“It’s our journeys together, my husband and I are journeying together, and our entire family is also on a journey.”

The Lador family – Adi; husband Ran, 44; son Itay, 13 and daughter Noa, 6½ -- arrived in the U.S. in July, 2018.

WHAT’S A DAY LIKE?
“I arrive at 6:30 a.m. and leave around 8 p.m. Every other Saturday I come in and do mainly post-op procedures.

“Most of my day is spent in the cath. lab doing procedures including complex ablations (from inside and outside of the heart) for complex arrhythmias, implanting pacemakers and defibrillators and doing EP studies for complex arrhythmias. How many procedures I do a day depends on the length of time needed for each one. Some procedures take more than six hours. The shortest procedures last 30 minutes.

“The fellowship was and continues to be very challenging for different reasons. When I first started I was almost completely new to all the procedures and technology. As an internist and non-surgical cardiologist, I had a lot of learning to do in a short period of time.

“Now I feel competent to perform most of the diagnoses and procedures by myself. Regarding the more complex procedures -- I feel confident with most parts, but still need help in other parts.

“My day is about 70 percent procedural, 20 percent clinical (including working with various diseases, using medications, communicating with patients, reading complex EKG’s and pathology) and 10 percent research.”

Lador published 17 articles and presented research abroad before coming to Houston. There is no dedicated research time at Houston Methodist; but she is in the process of publishing work from her fellowship period.

“One of the reasons I chose this fellowship is because my director loves research. While I can’t do all the research I’d like, I am involved in clinical trials with him. For example, we’re working on a new ablation technique to ablate a particularly difficult area to treat.

“And I’m getting ideas for research for myself. It’s always in the air.”
WHAT’S MOST GRATIFYING ABOUT YOUR WORK?
“The most gratifying aspect is to meet a patient who, after a complex ablation, now has no arrhythmia at all.”

ANY MENTORS YOU’D CARE TO MENTION?
“Dr. Leonard Leibovici is the director of the internal medicine department in which I did my residency and was the director of my research fellowship program. He is an amazing physician with endless knowledge and excellent clinical judgement. While I learned from him the basics of research; mostly he taught me how to be a good clinician. He guided me at the beginning of my medical journey.

“Dr. Ran Kornowski is the director of my cardiology division. Prof. Kornowski taught me and supported me throughout my cardiology fellowship. He helped me pursue my desire to become an electrophysiologist.

“Dr. Miguel Valderrabano is the director of the division of cardiac electrophysiology at Houston Methodist Hospital. He is the director of my current fellowship program. In addition to his busy clinical work he is also involved in many research projects. He has been guiding me from the beginning of my training, teaching me the basics of EP, both theory and basic knowledge, as well as procedural skills.”

WORK/LIFE BALANCE?
“I met my husband in medical school, married and later took my final exams with a baby at home. I took only six and a half weeks of maternity leave. It gives you a good perspective on work and family.

“But that’s not to say there isn’t a battle inside of me while I’m here. There’s always something to learn at the hospital – another procedure to scrub in on, something to read, research to do -- you could stay forever. But you have to go home. There are people and things there that need you.

“And above all, my family is the most important thing to me.

“It’s easier now that the kids are older. But still, my son has activities of his own; my young daughter needs to learn to read and to adjust to a new country. The business and the chaos of home and family are a big happiness for me.

“The fact that I’m a female physician doing a fellowship and my husband is not at home means there is no spouse dedicated to the family and the home – cooking, cleaning, homework, social stuff, etc. But my husband is very understanding. My extremely intense fellowship would not be possible without his help.

“And nothing would be possible without our extremely understanding kids.”

HOW HAS YOUR APF MONEY HELPED?
“Expenses are enormous, and I’d like to thank APF for this grant. It has helped with relocation costs such as tickets. It’s very costly to move a family from one country to another – it’s not just me and my husband.

“And sometimes, for example, I need to pay for conferences. I want to concentrate on my training with a little more peaceful mind. This money has certainly helped with that.

“I lose money on the whole thing, but what I gain is an enormous professional adventure that will stay with me forever. And my children get an experience that will stay with them forever – learning what it is to be in a different place to live. They know English fluently now. This is definitely something this money is good for.”

HOW WILL YOUR FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE HELP IMPROVE HEALTHCARE IN ISRAEL?
“Coming from an enormous referral center, I will have been exposed to the extreme of the extreme and to the average cases. I am working to be the best electrophysiologist I can be. As a matter of experience and technical ability I will have a lot to bring back to my department.

“Also, I will have a network – a professional and knowledgeable group from all over the world. I will always have these people for second opinions or for advice or for future research projects. And these are relationships that will stay with me always.”