



American Healthcare Professionals and Friends for Medicine in Israel

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One man's passion is another man's poison, they say.

Unless you're talking about those like Dr. Miguel Glatstein, for whom poison *is* a passion.

Pediatric emergency physician Glatstein is a 2016-2017 APF Clinical Fellow in Toxicology at the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center in Denver, Colorado.

"I'm passionate about toxicology because it is a specialty in which you have to be very specific very quickly. You must know a lot of physiology, biochemistry and pharmacology. It's not easy, but I adore it.

"And often you can see the results very quickly; I love that.

"Sometimes you have to be very clever because the patients cannot or will not tell you the truth, sometimes you have to be a bit of a detective."

The 43-year-old Buenos Aires native made Aliyah in 1998.

He attended medical school at Buenos Aires University and did his internship at Kaplan Medical Center in Rehovot (about 12 miles south of Tel Aviv). After internship he spent two years as a physician in the IDF's Nahal Infantry Brigade.

*Store your cleaning and laundry products carefully.
For example, small liquid and compressed
dishwasher and laundry packets are often mistaken
for candy.*

Glatstein did his residency at The Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center Dana-Dwek Children's Hospital. And for about a year from 2006 to 2007 he practiced at a family medicine clinic in Hanoi. "I had some free

time after residency and I was asked to come and work there. There were many Israelis there at the time."

He followed his Vietnam work with a 2007-2010 research and clinical fellowship at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), focusing on pediatric emergency medicine, pharmacology and toxicology. "We saw all the kids who came in for accidental and non-accidental poisoning (such as suicide attempt) and adverse reactions to medication."

In 2008 he received an APF Fellowship for his Canadian work.

Since 2010 Glatstein has been a pediatric emergency physician at Dana-Dwek Children's Hospital who also consults in toxicology and collaborates with Sourasky's clinical pharmacology unit.

Additionally, he is a Senior Lecturer on the Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University.

The Glatstein family, from Tel Aviv, includes Mom, Meirav Rozenblat Glatstein, 43, a biologist; daughter Tamar, 8, and sons Itay, 7 and Ariel, 4.

They will stay in Colorado for a year. The older children attend Jewish day school, while Ariel attends a Jewish day care center. The children participate in sports; Dad plays rugby.

"It was difficult for the kids at first, but they have made friends. The Jewish community here is great," he says. "We have a lot of friends and support. It's very nice."

The family is enjoying the snow and has traveled around Colorado.

Glatstein knew he wanted to become a doctor while only 10 years old. "My father is a doctor, so I knew I wanted to become a doctor or study philosophy," he said. "But because I like helping human beings and you can do a lot of things with medicine and meet a lot of people, I ultimately chose medicine. I didn't care too much about business, numbers and money. I like the humanistic angle of medicine – mostly the idea of helping people. But as a good doctor, you still have to know about history and philosophy."

Scorpions are often overlooked because of their size and hiding places – they are common in the Southwestern part of the U.S, where about 11,000 people a year are stung by them in Arizona alone. Scorpions are common in Israel.

During his internship he chose pediatrics for his career. "I like children," he said. "Children, in emergencies especially, can be very sick. But if you make a precise diagnosis and implement appropriate treatment rapidly, they can recover very quickly and you can see them smile and play. It feels very good."

During internship Glatstein chose extra rotations in pediatrics and intensive care.

"Next I had to decide whether I wanted to work in a hospital or a community setting," he said. "This was a difficult decision. I was considering emergency work and nephrology. I decided on emergency medicine because at my hospital in Tel Aviv they really need emergency physicians. And I decided that I didn't want to work in nephrology where much of the work is chronic care – which I find boring.

"In the pediatric ER, however, you see many different kinds of patients from many specialties and the time there is stressful -- it's stressful for you and for the parents as well.

"If you make a mistake in the ER, it can be very bad."

Store and use your prescription medications carefully. Misuse of cardiac and psychotropic

medications often land people in the emergency room.

Soon he realized he wanted to specialize in toxicology. "Pharmacology was always one of my favorite subjects."

So he went to Toronto.

Glatstein returned to Dana-Dwek Children's Hospital as an emergency physician, also providing clinical toxicology consulting services there and collaborating with Sourasky's clinical pharmacology unit.

But he wanted to further pursue his training in toxicology and there is no fellowship for this specialty in Israel – hence the need to go abroad again.

Why Denver?

Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center is one of the best and largest in the world, says Glatstein.

"The people here are the tops in the world. The equipment is too, as is the knowledge, the research, the medical science and the experience they have here," he says.

In addition to Colorado, the center covers: Wyoming, Montana, Hawaii, Nevada and Utah. Staff also consults at: The University of Colorado Hospital in Denver, Denver Health and Children's Hospital Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

Poisonings fall into these categories: accidental poisonings and intentional poisonings (either homicide or suicide attempts).

Another of the reasons Glatstein chose Denver for his fellowship is its larger volume and greater diversity of patients. "Here I see 10 patients per day and take calls. In Israel I'd maybe see two or three patients a day."

There are five fellows at Rocky Mountain, four Americans and Glatstein.

Just because a medication is non-prescription doesn't mean it isn't poison. Too much acetaminophen can kill.

A day is 12 hours long – with eight hours for clinical and four for research. Weekend work is not included in that total.

“We start at 7:30 in the morning and work eight or nine hours, some of it on the phones. From 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. we have rounds when we discuss all the patients who came in during the night. We see patients in the three hospitals we cover. We have to give presentations to students and work on research projects. And we have material to study every week.

“It is very intense, very busy; you have to study every day and work on your individual research. Also there are case rounds and grand rounds to prepare for.”

What kind of research has Glatstein been pursuing?

- Snake bite anti-venom and reactions in children
- Geographic reasons for increases in jelly fish stings in Israel
- Treatment for ammonia ingestion in children
- Treatment for valproic acid (uses include treatment of: migraines, bipolar disorder and seizures) poisoning and hyperammonemia (a metabolic disturbance characterized by an excess of ammonia in the blood)

Beware of snakes. There are more than 20 species of venomous snakes in North America and they live in most states of the US. About 8,000 people are bitten every year.

What are some of the most interesting cases Glatstein has encountered?

“A child came in with liver failure and we finally found that there'd been chronic acetaminophen intoxication. She'd taken too much for pain and no one knew she'd been taking it.

“And there was the case of an 8-month-old with lethargy whose urine sample produced an unknown substance that was finally found to be morphine. Someone had been giving the child morphine and we don't know yet if it was accidental or not.

“Then there was a 12-year-old who became very ill because she used synthetic marijuana.”

What awaits Glatstein when he returns to Israel?

He will continue his work as a pediatric emergency room physician and teacher, but he will also become the director of his hospital's first pediatric toxicology service. The program will serve nearly 500,000 residents in the northern part of the greater Tel Aviv area.

“And of course I will continue to be in contact with my American colleagues.

“This is a totally positive experience for me. I was not truly prepared to take a phone call or do consults before. And now I can do it – for adults or children. I thought I knew something about toxicology, but I really knew nothing if I compare what I knew then with what I know now.

“But I must continue to learn. By the time I'm done, I will have totally changed my skills in toxicology.”

Don't take medication in the dark. You might mistake super-strength glue for eye drops.

American Physicians Fellowship for Medicine in Israel

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