Dr. Brian Keisler
Assistant Professor of Clinical Family and Preventive Medicine

What Attracted Me To Family Medicine:
The diversity. You never know what you may see or whom you may meet with each patient encounter.

My Great Inspiration Has Been:
My father. Not only as a physician, but in his daily life as a dedicated member of his family and the community.

What Amazes Me About My Patients:
Every patient has a unique story and background.

It’s Tough For Me To Admit That:
I cannot do everything myself, both in life and in medicine.

Medicine Never Bores Me Because:
It has never seemed like a job to me. I can think of no other profession that requires the same lifelong commitment to learning.

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My Most Important Role With Patients Is:
To listen.

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Helping a patient develop insightful changes in their thoughts and actions.

What Appealed To Me About USC:
The Department of Neuropsychiatry is so well-rounded and talented.

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Patient improvement is extremely rewarding.

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“Never put a twenty-dollar plant in a ten-cent hole.” (More than just a gardening tip)

Connecting With New Faculty
University Specialty Clinics
February 2006

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Now Connections launched its newest feature: Connecting With New Faculty. This insert was created as a way to introduce the School of Medicine’s newest full-time clinical faculty members. Each of this issue’s 14 faculty members was asked to ponder some thought-provoking questions about themselves and their careers. Their replies appear inside, along with portraits that depict some of them on the job and others enjoying leisure time pursuits.
Dr. Charles Carter Jr.
Assistant Professor of Clinical Family and Preventive Medicine

Medicine Fascinates Me Because:
We have more questions than answers.

It Pains Me To See Patients Who:
Put more faith in medications than wellness and lifestyle changes.

I Can’t Work Without:
Great colleagues.

Words I Live By:
My patients teach me new ones all the time. Here’s the latest: “If you only look down, all you’ll ever see is dirt.”

What Frustrates Me Is:
The increasing emphasis on specialization in our healthcare system. We need generalists!

What Drives My Work:
Meeting the intellectual and sometimes creative challenges in caring for the critically ill.

I Can’t Work Without:
A sense of humor and a cup of coffee.

Has Found His Niche At Home: In The Kitchen

Dr. Lydia Chang
Assistant Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine

Words I Live By:
Critical care is primary care for the really, really sick.

When I Retire, I Want To Say That I:
Never ossified and stayed intellectually engaged by my work.

I’m Determined To:
Keep learning every day.

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Dr. Sarah Smith
Assistant Professor of Clinical Obstetrics/Gynecology

What Amazes Me About My Patients:
Their complete trust in me, even the first time I meet them.

My Passion In Medicine Is:
Surgery. It takes many years to be a great surgeon and I love learning new things that make me a better surgeon.

What Pains Me To See Patients Who:
Are afraid to get medical care because they fear that something is wrong.

The Biggest Professional Challenge I’ve Faced:
Deciding to leave private practice and start over in academics. It was the best career decision I have ever made.

Medicine Never Bores Me Because:
Every patient has a different story and if you listen to them, this is the most fascinating profession.

Not Unusual To Find Her: Stirring Up Something In The Kitchen

Dr. Stephen Fann
Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery

I First Thought About Medicine When:
My grandmother was injured in an automobile accident.

Medical Never Bores Me Because:
No two days or patients are ever the same.

A Good Physician Needs To:
Step outside their own perspective.

My Toughest Lesson Learned During Residency:
You can’t save everyone.

In 20 Years I See Myself:
Continuing to learn and grow as a father, husband, friend and physician.

A Big Fan Of:
Fly Fishing

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Dr. Sunil Sharma
Assistant Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine

What Drew me to Columbia:
Warm climate and warmer hearts!

I First Thought About Medicine When:
I was introduced to biology in school and was fascinated by the complexity of the human body.

The Biggest Impact I’ve Seen On Internal Medicine:
Technology has overwhelmed the personal touch and humanistic part of medicine.

Colleagues Say That I:
Am a team player.

What Frustrates Me Is:
telling a patient with a terminal disease that “there is nothing more I can do for you.”

Dr. Matthew Weinecke
Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics

Medicine Fascinates Me Because:
The longer I practice medicine, the more I appreciate the art of medicine, rather than the science of medicine.

The Biggest Professional Challenge I’ve Faced:
Helping families deal with the loss of a child.

The Turning Point In My Career Was:
Becoming a fellow in pediatric cardiology.

I’ll Never Forget the Patient Who:
Was diagnosed very early in her life with Hurler’s syndrome. She has undergone successful bone marrow transplantation and the devastating effects of Hurler’s syndrome were halted.

Physicians Can Change Patients’ Lives By:
Listening.

Dr. Keshia Elder
Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics

The Turning Point In My Career:
When I became comfortable with my role as a Doctor of Optometry. I know what I know.

What Drives My Work:
Knowing that I provide a service that can enrich the quality of people’s lives.

The Biggest Impact I’ve Seen In Optometry:
The authority to treat ocular disease. We are the only doctors that some patients see consistently.

My Most Important Role With Patients:
Listening to their concerns and acknowledging their problems.

My Greatest Inspiration:
My mother. I try to carry some of her compassion with me at all times.

Dr. Burke Dial
Associate Professor of Clinical Surgery

I Wouldn’t Have Chosen Another Specialty Because:
No other organ is as interesting as the brain.

I’ll Never Forget The Patient Who:
Survived an epidural hematoma and grew up to teach English in Columbia.

I Can’t Work Without:
The support of my family.

I’d Like To Think That My Patients Say I:
Truly and clearly explain the alternatives available to them.

I Truly Enjoy:
Getting good results from my surgical cases.

His Passion Off The Job:
Hunting.
Dr. Kenneth Mitchell  
Associate Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology  

I Wouldn’t Have Chosen Another Specialty Because: Ophthalmology includes aspects of all other disciplines. “The eyes are windows to the soul,” said the Bard.  

My Passion In Medicine Is: To pass the torch to doctors in training.  

What I’d Want My Epitaph To Read: He touched many and they were much better for it.  

It Pains Me To See Patients That: Have to choose between medications and other things in their budget.  

A Good Physician Needs To: Imagine, truly, that he/she was the patient, and explain, answer and care that way.  

Dr. Divya Ahuja  
Assistant Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine  

What Drew Me To Columbia: The untapped potential in a department and a city that are yet to make their mark on this nation.  

What Drives My Work: The desire to do the best I can and a bit more for my patients.  

I’ll Never Forget The Patient Who: Was smiling ‘til the very end.  

I Truly Enjoy: Being fit enough to go to the gym everyday.  

Daily Routine Includes: Working Out At The Gym  

Dr. Muhammad Raza  
Assistant Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine  

The Toughest Lesson Learned During My Training: Never to think of a disease or situation as a simple, straightforward one.  

What Appealed To Me About USC: Southern warmth and easy-going family-oriented lifestyle.  

My Great Inspiration: My father, who took care of his family while educating himself to be a civil engineer.  

I Wouldn’t Have Chosen Another Specialty Because: I love managing difficult problems and it’s gratifying to see the appropriate therapy making people better.  

In 20 Years I See Myself: Being a professor of medicine and well-known internationally for my work in Pulmonary Hypertension.  

Dr. Whitney Thoma  
Assistant Professor of Clinical Obstetrics/Gynecology  

What Attracted Me To Obstetrics/Gynecology Was: My interest in women’s healthcare.  

Physicians Can Change Patients’ Lives By: Listening to them.  

Words I Live By: Always remember what is important.  

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