

Family Physician Educates Others through Media

THE PATH THAT LED Jennifer Caudle, DO, a board-certified family physician, to family medicine was not a straight one, nor was it a conventional one. However, despite the twists and turns,

Dr. Caudle's experiences have led to a passion for medicine and health education.

While attending Princeton University, the accomplished cellist learned about the Miss America Organization and the scholarship assistance available through participation. Dr. Caudle, in search of scholarships, not only participated in a pageant, she went on to win the title of Miss Iowa 1999 and competed for the title of Miss America.

Although she didn't win the crown, the pageant world introduced Dr. Caudle to public speaking, cameras, and how to use the media to get a message across. The experiences gleaned through the Miss America Organization stuck with Dr. Caudle, and she kept them in her back pocket for the future.

Fast-forward a few years, Dr. Caudle entered medical school at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – School of Osteopathic Medicine. During her third year, like many medical students, Dr. Caudle struggled with picking a specialty.

"I think it's really about who you are as a person – it's a personality decision," she says. "Do you only want to listen to hearts all day? Do you want to spend all day in the operating room, or do you want variety?"

After self-reflection, Dr. Caudle decided on family medicine, despite it not being considered one of the "cool specialties," because she couldn't imagine a more perfectly suited specialty for her.

"In family medicine, we're dealing with different patients of all ages – those who are sick, but also those who are healthy. You get to stay ahead of problems by educating and counseling patients," she says.

Dr. Caudle says she has no regrets with choosing Family Medicine, despite its challenges.

"Yes, I wish I had more time with patients and less paperwork, but it's so rewarding. We become a

"In family medicine, we're dealing with different patients of all ages – you get to stay ahead of problems by educating and counseling patients."

partner on life's journey – we know patients inside and out and what's going on in their lives. We're not treating just one facet of the patient, we're treating the entire patient and part of that is who the patient is and what's going on with them," she says.

More importantly, she has found ways to integrate her profession with some of her own passions, creating a rewarding and fulfilling life.

The daughter of two educators, it was a natural progression for Dr. Caudle to incorporate education into her role as a family physician. Following her residency (UMD-NJ/SOM Kennedy Memorial Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes), Dr. Caudle immediately entered the academic world.

"Teaching is just a natural part of what I should be doing," she says.

As an osteopathic physician and assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine at Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine and third-year clerkship director, her daily interaction with medical students helps them to navigate the medical field, which keeps her stimulated and motivated.

Drawing on the lessons learned through her experiences with the Miss America Organization, Dr. Caudle also uncovered how to use her voice as a physician to educate those outside of the classroom or medical office.



Dr. Caudle

"The people who talk about medicine should be the same people who participate in medicine," says Dr. Caudle. "We all should be actively participating in the dialogue of health."

Today, Dr. Caudle serves as a regular on-air health expert for local and national news networks. She appears on CNN, The Dr. Oz Show, FOX News, CBS Philly 3 News, PBS and many others. Her health articles have appeared on The Daily Beast, CNN.com, DoctorOz.com, ABCNews.com and she has been quoted by The Huffington Post, among many other outlets.

Dr. Caudle considers her health communication work a calling, just as much of a calling as practicing medicine.

"Medicine wants all of us. It's easy to give everything to it and forget who we are," she says. "As physicians, we need to find creative ways to fulfill our passions and use our skills. We can't forget who we were when we came into this profession." ▲

To learn more about Dr. Caudle, visit www.jennifercaudle.com or follow her on Twitter and Instagram @drjencaudle.