

Physician Profile

Dr. Richard Adelman, MD



Dr. Richard Adelman, Leon, Jane, David and Max

Dr. Richard Adelman has been practicing family medicine for over 20 years in Wake County. He has served as Chief of Department of Medicine at both Duke Health Raleigh Community and Rex Hospitals. While he admits these are distinctive honors, they do not serve as the pinnacle or definition of his success in life and medicine.

Raised in Chicago, the young Richard Adelman, and his five siblings, attended Bryn Mawr Elementary School. This school appears to provide an excellent foundation since alumnus not only includes the five Adelman children who are successful, practicing physicians and attorneys but also, First Lady hopeful, Michelle Obama among others. Dr. Adelman continued his education at Carlton College where he studied Chemistry in preparation for a life in medicine. He graduated from Northwest Medical School - Chicago in 1975 and enjoyed residencies in Family Practice at St. Joseph Hospital in Denver.

Medicine has been a part of Dr. Adelman's life from the beginning. His grandfather was Leon Unger, who founded the Department of Allergy & Immunology at Northwestern University and authored the first textbook on this specialty. Dr. Adelman had his first taste of medicine here, and he often worked at his grandfather's office remembering fondly his encouraging words, "Man, oh man, I'll be a doctor if I can."

Earning his MD, Dr. Adelman practiced family medicine in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, San Diego, California and at the Kupat Holim Clinic, Kiryot Shmona in Israel. Returning to the states, he was ready to find where he wanted to spend the rest of his life. This is where fate stepped in. One Christmas while driving to visit family with his brother, Jim (a practicing neurologist in Greensboro), his three kids and Rich's two boys, Jim took a

wrong turn and there they were, a family packed in a Chevy station wagon hopelessly tired, hungry and lost. Dr. Adelman looked up at the street sign and recognized California Street as the address of a college friend, Jane Pinsky. When the Adelman 'clan' arrived, Jane answered the door in her old Carlton College sweatshirt and shorts. She was baking Christmas cookies for everyone in her office, which were quickly eaten by her new guests. As a thank you for her generosity and friendship, they all went to see a play starring Charlton Heston at the Kennedy Center. Rich and Jane have been together ever since.

Dr. Adelman came to practice in Raleigh after looking at several locations, including San Diego, Greensboro, and Charlotte. Raleigh simply had the best offer and environment. "I love it here and I knew in the first week here this is where I wanted to spend the rest of my life. People are so nice. It's friendly."

In 1986, Dr. Adelman started the Jewish Community Health Fair to benefit his temple. Now, 22 years on, the fair sees over 800 people and provides free services to the community.

About the same time, Dr. Adelman began pursuing another interest – becoming a mohel, a Jewish man who performs the Jewish ritual of brit milah. This pursuit was not without its obstacles. Trying to find classes and curriculum in Raleigh, North Carolina was not a simple task. Classes were being offered by a Los Angeles Rabi in LA, Chicago, and New York. After seven years of conversation, Dr. Adelman persuaded the Union of Hebrew American Congregations to let him set up the first satellite training program in Raleigh. For 15 years, Dr. Adelman has been an ordained mohel and celebrating this ritual with over 100 families per year all over the Triangle and beyond.

His mother accompanied him one weekend and couldn't help but question her son's use of time and talents. She said, "This is ridiculous. There are better ways for you to spend your free time. Why are you doing this?" As soon as we arrived, you could hardly get in the door for the people. My

mother knew at that moment that what I was doing was something really special. There is no better miracle than a child being born and this is the family and community coming together to provide support for a new life. It's a wonderful ritual and event. And, the food is always good.

All of the money that comes from the brit milah goes to charity and a portion pays for an art teacher at his temple. "My logic behind this is if a child brings home Jewish art, the parents are obligated to use it. So, if a child brings home candle holders, the parents have to light candles on Friday night. If the child brings a Kiddush wine cup, the parents have to say a prayer over the wine. The family becomes involved in the rituals that make up the Jewish religion. The family comes together."

Dr. Adelman's family shares his passion for community and giving. He has been married to Jane, a lobbyist, for 18 years. "We have a wonderful relationship and each year it gets better and better. The luckiest thing to happen to me is Jane." His four children all have bright futures. "They do amazingly well in school. But, that's not the important thing. They each do good for society and good for mankind and that's the most important thing." The two oldest children, Leon and Dave, have already embarked on successful career paths having attended Brown and Harvard. Leon has chosen to follow in his father's footsteps and go into medicine.

Leon was named after my grandfather, who wrote the first major textbook on Allergy & Immunology. After attending Brown, he took some time off and returned to a career in medicine. "I'm hoping he will come and work with me, I think every father wants that with their son(s). But, wherever he chooses to go, he will find success."

Having a son attending medical school, allows for Dr. Adelman to explore changes in the teaching of medicine today. "When I talk to my son's friends I ask, 'What was your favorite rotation?' They always say the same thing, family care, internal medicine. When I ask, 'What are you going to do?' They inevitably respond with a specialty." Dr. Adelman can see the conflict. The young doctors have a debt *Continued on page 34*

of \$100,000 - \$200,000 and have to weigh the option of being a family physician working 80 hours a week, or going into a specialty where they make at least twice as much and work less than half the hours. "From their standpoint, they are right. Why would you choose otherwise?"

The problem with medicine today is that there are too many specialists and not enough Family Physicians. Dr. Adelman believes that the growth in Wake County has been fantastic, but care should be provided by primary care doctors. "There's an incredible amount of specialists, making an incredible amount of money, and that doesn't make people healthier." When a people choose their own specialist, 75% of the time they choose the wrong one and don't have a clear idea of what the base of the issue really is. If they saw a family doctor, the conversation would start in a

different place because of the caring relationship. "People often get sick because of life stresses, and unfortunately, the specialists miss life stresses or the root cause. People need to understand that health is more than a quick fix." Dr. Adelman firmly believes that healthcare should be a relationship. When a patient gets sick, they see their family physician, they talk about the issues, and are pointed in the right direction.

Working with Dr. Adelman for over nine year, Dot Wood recognizes his gifts. "I have worked with other practices and Dr. Adelman has a true interest in his patients and care. He is the only physician I know that will take the time to call each patient personally. He goes out of his way to do for his patients."

And, while Dr. Adelman is very proud and appreciative of his professional accolades and titles, his greatest reward comes from patient compliments and the things he does daily to help people live healthier lives. ∞



Fast Facts: Family pictured above (left to right): Leon is a Resident in Emergency Medicine in Boston, David works with investments and just recently applied for his MBA, Emma is a Senior at Raleigh Charter, and Max is a Sophomore at Raleigh Charter where he plays tennis. My wife, Jane (see photo on page 14) runs a collaborative to reform lobby law

Board Certified in:
Adult Medicine, Pediatrics and Sports Medicine

Community Activities & Hobbies:
 Founder, Jewish Community Health Fair
 Founder, Wake County Maccabiah Games for Youth
 Volunteer, Open Door Clinic
 City of Chicago Tennis Champion
 State of Illinois Swimming Champion
 Midwest Conference Intercollegiate Swimming Champion
 Waterfront Director, Camp Scatico, New York
 Running: Boston Marathon, Pike's Peak Marathon, Mr. Evans Distance Run
 Hiking: Climbed 12 of the 14,000 foot Colorado mountains
 Skiing: Colorado Doctor's Ski Patrol

Honors: Handler Scholarship to do Cancer Research at the City of Hope Medical Center with Dr. Kiojun Kinosita
 Isadore Pilot Scholarship to study Family Practice in rural California
 ASA Physician Recognition Board
 Fellow of the American Academy of Family Practice
 Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary International
 Chief of Department of Medicine at Duke Health Raleigh Community
 Chief of Department of Medicine at Rex Hospital
 2007 Rotarian of the Year

Professional Affiliations:
 American Academy of Family Practice
 North Carolina Academy of Family Practice
 Wake County Medical Society
 North Carolina Medical Society
 Southern Medical Association

When Asked:
 Q: *What I like best about RTP?*
 A: I like the friendly nature of the people in Raleigh and how welcoming the people of Raleigh are.
 Q: *What I like least in Raleigh?*
 How few bicycle lanes there are in Raleigh.
 Q: *What is the last book you read?*
 A: Predictably Irrational by Dan Ariely - great book.
 Q: *What is the last movie you saw?*
 A: Batman - a great movie! My son, Max, and I went and saw it.

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