

All in the Family:

A Spotlight on Duval County Medical Society Members Dr. Nitesh Paryani and Dr. Mara Cvejic-Paryani

By Erica Santillo, Duval County Medical Society



Dr. Nitesh Paryani and Dr. Mara Cvejic-Paryani at the 2015 Florida Medical Association Annual Meeting in Orlando.

Coming from a family of doctors can be daunting, but descending from a medical dynasty can mean big shoes to fill.

Dr. Nitesh Paryani is a third generation radiation oncologist; both his grandfather and uncle were oncologists. He also has an aunt who is an infectious disease doctor and three cousins who are physicians, though his cousins don't practice in the city.

Dr. Mara Cvejic-Paryani was a pediatric neurologist and is now a doctor of sleep medicine. She is a first generation physician in her family, but she married into a Jacksonville medical dynasty: the Paryani's.

"His family is a bunch of really, really nice people," Dr. Cvejic-Paryani said. "There are a lot of things that they've done for the community of Jacksonville. And I see why Nitesh loves it so much here,

because they've made a point of really becoming an integral part of it. They come across as very down to earth, very friendly, very giving, and that's kind of refreshing."

The Paryani "dynasty" has been making an impact on the Jacksonville community since 1964, when Dr. Paryani's grandfather started practicing medicine. According to Dr. Paryani, his grandfather helped build the cancer center at what's now Baptist Hospital and also practiced at what is now UF Health. His uncle works at FROG, the Florida Radiation Oncology Group, and his aunt is with Nemours.

"I'm pretty proud of what my ancestors have accomplished," Dr. Paryani said. "I think that it's an honor that the folks in this city have trusted us with their cancer care since 1964. That's pretty wild to me, because at the end of the day, that's what it is with a

doctor: trust. They've trusted us for that long, and I hope they continue to trust us to take care of them."

The Paryanis have been married for over a year. Though both are busy medical professionals, they are just like any other married couple. They discuss their jobs, have inside jokes and compete and argue with each other on certain things.

But their secret to a happy marriage in the hectic medical world is keeping shop talk to a minimum and learning to take time for one another.

Marrying a fellow doctor poses many challenges, but marrying your boss is a challenge in itself. The running joke between the couple is that Dr. Cvejic-Paryani was her husband's "boss" before they were married. In reality, the neurologist was his senior while he was a resident intern, meaning that she wasn't directly his boss.

"She's just the boss at home now," he said jokingly.

What Dr. Cvejic-Paryani thinks is the most rewarding aspect of their work is when a patient says 'thank you.' She said they compete about who gets the most from patients, and she thinks he wins.

"Being a neurologist or a sleep specialist, the thank you is implied," Dr. Cvejic-Paryani said. "But every now and then, there's an awesome patient who is just like, 'thank you so much,' and it really makes your year."

Dr. Paryani said he knows they are both in the right fields because they each think their spouse has the more emotionally challenging job. He said when they argue about who has the more challenging position, they argue for the other's side.

"She deals with sick kids and I deal with sick adults. To me, sick adults are a lot less depressing than a sick kid, but then again for her, she says 'well, I'm only dealing with neurological disease and you're dealing with cancer,'" Dr. Paryani said. "I think it's a good sign that we each think the other one has it worse; it means we both picked the right job."

Neither set out to enter the medical field; he was a political science major and she majored in French. But ironically, they both ended up as doctors and are now emulating Dr. Paryani's aunt and uncle: working as a radiation oncologist and a pediatric doctor.

"Nitesh is basically emulating his uncle; he wants to be a private

practice radiation oncologist and take care of cancer patients in Jacksonville, and I, on the other hand, as his spouse do the same thing that his aunt does, which is pediatrics," Dr. Cvejic-Paryani said. "She does pediatric infectious disease. She did her training at Stanford and so did his uncle, and I did my training at Stanford for my fellowship, so there are some weird, overlapping similarities, which has made it kind of fun because you can just continuously learn. It's a good family to be a part of."

The doctors met through mutual friends, including Dr. Paryani's brother, according to Dr. Cvejic-Paryani. She said they were friends for two years before anything became romantic.

Both consider the biggest challenge in their marriage to be the time commitment that their jobs demand. Dr. Cvejic-Paryani said those challenges were there from the beginning; their wedding was planned while she was across the country studying in California. He was still in Jacksonville. But what is a challenge for them is made easier by their shared understanding.

"The fact that we're both physicians, we understand that when one person can't be there for something, they can't be there because it's work," Dr. Paryani said. "We understand that one person may need to be up in the middle of the night taking calls all night, and that we

may not be able to travel because the other person has to take call."

The duo hasn't directly worked together since Dr. Cvejic-Paryani left Mayo Clinic to work at UF Health. However, she said they are looking into starting a project together about the relation between cancer and sleep. She said there are similarities in some cases and forms of cancer treatments.

"One particular case, there's pediatric patients that have a type of tumor that when it's resected, they have this weird, excessively sleepy period for about three months where all they do is sleep, really, for like 20 hours a day. And we don't know why it happens," she said.

Both doctors are members of the Duval County Medical Society and are actively involved in the medical community. Dr. Paryani is the Young Physician's Representative for the DCMS Board of Directors and is on the board for the Florida Medical Association; his wife is a delegate for DCMS to the FMA. They both are a part of the medical society to not only be a voice in the medical



Drs. Shyam and Nitesh Paryani stand in front of the linear accelerator at Beaches Cancer Center at Baptist Beaches. A linear accelerator creates high energy x-rays, which are used in the treatment of cancer patients.



Paryani family photo from Thanksgiving 2014: Among the clan are two radiation oncologists, a pediatric infectious disease specialist, a sleep medicine specialist/pediatric neurologist, an allergist, an internist, two dentists, a retired physician, a psychotherapist and a pathologist!

community, but so they can have something extra to do together.

“My wife and I both have developed friendships with other physicians through the society,” Dr. Paryani said. “It allows for people to have a voice in policy and allows you to meet other like-mind-

ed physicians. Without it, you’re just on the sidelines, and Duval County Medical Society has a strong history of being involved in shaping medical policy. I think it’s one of the strongest medical societies in the country.”

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