ALL THE RIGHT STUFF

With his patient-focused approach, Jeffrey Kahn, M.D., keeps the humanity within healthcare delivery alive at Austin Ear, Nose & Throat Clinic.

By HEATHER DANIELS

DR. JEFFREY KAHN at Austin Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) Clinic was born and raised in California, outside of Berkeley. His father is a physician who still practices in Oakland today. I used to tag along with him to the hospital when he rounded on the weekends,” Kahn says. “My dad has always enjoyed practicing medicine and I am certain that to a degree his positive experience influenced my decision to become a physician myself.”

After Kahn completed his residency at Baylor in Houston in 2001, he felt very fortunate to have found a dollar place to practice in Austin – a city he describes as vibrant and creative. “My wife and I met on a blind date in Austin, and we were married here. As well, so we had many positive feelings about this town and were excited to settle here. “Since then, they have been blessed with three awesome children.

Kahn’s prestigious and extremely well-rounded undergraduate and medical school education: his keen ability to practice his specialty of otolaryngology with excellence and his desire to listen to his patients concerns with genuine interest are indeed the best combination in the medical field. And Kahn is making a return to this type of treatment to ensure that the doctor-patient relationship is solid.

Attending Duke University, Kahn graduated with thesis honors in economics, magna cum laude, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Going into Duke he knew he wanted to be a doctor, but he still wanted to explore the more liberal arts side of the curriculum.

“I immediately connected with the way economics explained our behavior in the face of choices,” he says. “Also an economics major had the fewest requirements, which allowed me to complete the prerequisites for medical school and still have time to take drama, art, sculpture, literature courses and to camp out for many Duke basketball games.”

Returning to California for medical school at the University of California San Francisco, Kahn spent one year during medical school doing health policy work, splitting his times between the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention, the New Center for the Health Professionals and a position in medical decision-making in breast care. The latter ultimately formed the basis for his elective thesis work.

In medical school, he connected with his interest in doctor-patient communication – “how we communicate as doctors, and how patients hear and respond to us.” Between my first and second year of medical school, I developed a course on doctor-patient communication. “I think it was the 1st course on this topic anywhere.”

During his last year of medical school, Kahn completed a thesis on decision-making with regard to breast masses. This project was primarily about how we present information to and elicit information from patients: how we can use data and studies to help guide our patients through the process of decision-making, and how we as doctors carry biases that sometimes cloud that process.”

Kahn completed his general surgical internship and otolaryngology (ENT) residency at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. He did several research projects focused on clinical care issues, including indications for imaging in temporal bone fractures, and facial paralysis and facial nerve monitoring. He won a student fellowship for his research block completing it at Harvard’s Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

He attributes fame from Kahn’s educational endeavors and his philosophies that the patient always comes first. It is one of the many reasons he has an outstanding patient following and referral base.

“During a visit to my office, the patient is the absolute focus,” Kahn explains. “I want to connect with patients to promote healing through understanding the facts of medicine, it is my job to distill patients’ issues down to their essence so that they can make the right choices for themselves. The clarity of the interaction I have with patients forms the foundation for good health care choices. In general, in non-emergency situations where we have the benefit of time and patience, it is best to proceed from less to more invasive. My approach to each patient is through open minded thoughtful and genuine.”

Kahn details his daily practice at Austin ENT Clinic: “I’m a general otolaryngologist. I see both adults and children, and really enjoy seeing all ages. I’ve found that practicing in both spheres makes me a better doctor overall. I often borrow what I have observed and learned caring for one group and apply it to the other.”

Austin ENT Clinic was established more than 30 years ago and is one of the largest ENT clinics in the nation. The practice now has 12 physicians, all of whom are board certified by the American Board of Otolaryngology. All doctors see pediatric and adult patients. Eleven of the doctors treat all aspects of general otolaryngology, and one physician treats only ear disease – otology and neurotology.

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They also provide comprehensive ear, hearing and balance care. Patients with hearing loss can elect to meet directly with the hearing center staff for testing and hearing aid evaluation. The physicians frequently evaluate snoring and sleep apnea and minimally invasive procedure options are available for appropriately selected patients. Patients suffering with voice problems, including professional singers, have often sought care at Austin ENT Clinic.

In addition to his general otolaryngology practice, Kahn has been involved with the Travis County Medical Society, the Texas Medical Association and the Travis County Association of Otolaryngology. He currently serves as president of the Texas Association of Otolaryngology and on a search committee for the inaugural director of the Center for Health Communications at UT Austin.

In the long run, Kahn wants to preserve his patient-focused approach, which can be challenging in the face of external structural changes in the medical payment system. With increasing time and financial constraints, the field of health communication will play an ever-increasing role.

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“I believe that ultimately, the patient holds the answer to the course of care.”

Kahn is located in the clinic’s North Austin office near the Arboretum. With offices in North Central and South Austin, Kyle, Bastrop and Lockhart, Austin ENT Clinic has Central Texas covered with quality care. They evaluate and treat patients with nasal breathing difficulties, chronic sinusitis, tonsillitis, tracheostomy, ear infections, hearing loss, dizziness, allergies, snoring, sleep apnea, thyroid nodules, gaiture and other head and neck masses, head and neck pain and voice problems.

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