

Richard W. Snyder II, MD

President's Page

Know your DCMS President: Richard W. Snyder II, MD

By Lauren Cowling, director of communications

## **THE FACTS**

- Joined HeartPlace in 1996, opening the Medical City Dallas Hospital Office.
- Board certified in general and interventional cardiology
- Active member of multiple professional societies; served on the Board of Governors of the American College of Cardiology and as president of the Texas Chapter of the ACC
- Serves on the board of directors for TEXPAC (Texas Medical Association Political Action Committee) and for the American College of Cardiology PAC
- Began the HeartPlace PAC in 2000

## **THE LIFE**

Like many physicians, Richard W. Snyder II, MD, became interested in medicine because of illness and injuries he faced in his youth and which found him in the care of skilled physicians. But unlike most of his colleagues, he majored in French and spent a year in France before attending medical school. On paper, his career path may seem like an anomaly, but in actuality, it's anything but that.

Dr. Snyder grew up in Dallas after his father's job transferred the family south from Indiana. At 12 years old, he became familiar with the medical profession when a physician told him he had a hole in his heart. A cardiologist then discovered that, instead of a hole, he had a small murmur. The physician told him he was fine and required no treatment.

A couple years later, he slipped and fell while retrieving a bottle of milk from his front porch. He cut his left hand so deeply on the milk bottle glass that he could see his bone, nerves, muscles, and tendons. Instead of frightening him, what he saw fostered his interest in the body and how it works, and was a cool sight for a young teenager. He initially thought he'd be unable to use his hand again, but physicians patched him up. He suffered no long-term motor problems, only mild sensory loss in the palm at the wrist.

Those two experiences led to his working in the operating room at Medical City Dallas Hospital as an anesthesia technician during his teenage years and ultimately to his pursuit of medicine as a career.

After finishing high school at Jesuit College Preparatory in Dallas, he attended Notre Dame. After a physician told him that medical schools considered more than only grades on student applications, he decided to pursue a bachelor of arts degree in French and preprofessional studies. And because he was told to broaden his horizons while at Notre Dame, he participated in the university's foreign studies program in Angers, France, and spent his sophomore year at the Universite' Catholique de l'Ouest. He calls the decision to study in France for a year the best decision he's ever made.

"I learned to understand the world from another person's perspective," Dr. Snyder says. "I had to understand people – I was the one who was different. I had to immerse myself into other people's lives and world, and now that's what I try to do with my patients every day."

## **THE PHYSICIAN AND PATIENT ADVOCATE**

After graduating from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas in 1987, he completed his residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in cardiovascular disease. He prides himself on being a preventive specialist, emphasizing the prevention of cardiovascular disease primarily through risk factor modification, especially diet, exercise and weight loss.

Dr. Snyder's interest in patients and quality care for every patient began while he was in France, years before he had patients. Adapting to the culture and living with families who didn't speak English

fostered his view that people should be treated with equal respect and patience – people respected him and were tolerant with him while he was getting acquainted with the culture.

“The physician-patient alignment is the ultimate alignment, and we have to preserve that. Physicians have to be patient advocates, first and foremost,” he stresses. “We have to change the culture,” he says, adding that being an advocate for patients is more than just words – it requires action.

Dr. Snyder acts on his words through his deep involvement in the political process. He was drawn into the political side of medicine around 2001 when tort reform was on the table in Texas. He was one of the first Dallas physicians to request “Yes on 12” yard signs in support of the constitutional amendment to set monetary caps on damages. In addition to planting signs in his yard, he put them on any empty space around his hospital building.

Through the proposition and passage of tort reform, Dr. Snyder saw that lawmakers in Washington and Austin tremendously affected the quality of patient care.

“I saw that legislators – not physicians – were impacting decisions for patient care,” he says. “And I learned that being an advocate for our patients meant getting involved. We are going through the greatest change in health care this country has ever seen, and we as physicians can have almost as much impact in the legislative chambers on the health care our patients receive as we have in the exam room.”

Dr. Snyder educates himself on the issues that matter. He travels to DC at least once a year for a legislative briefing, goes to Austin as needed to meet with state lawmakers and testify before committees, and meets with lawmakers in their district offices. He doesn’t shy away from the tough discussions and knows that physicians must relentlessly defend the provision of quality care for patients during every legislative session.

## **THE PRESIDENT**

Dr. Snyder’s goals for his year as DCMS president begin and end with involvement – engaging physicians and encouraging them to participate more in their medical society and in legislative advocacy. He believes in and acts on his role as patient advocate, and wants his DCMS colleagues to join him.

“We have an opportunity to shape the process and be at the table,” he says of health system reform. “We can be involved and move away from the fear and uncertainty, and move into shaping the process.”

## **THE MAN**

Dr. Snyder is married to Shelley Hall, MD, a cardiologist and medical director of heart failure and cardiac transplantation at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas.

Their five children – Eileen, Bobby, Jessi, Alex, and Nicholas – range from age 13 to 27. Only Jessi, Alex and Nicholas are still at home.

When Dr. Snyder isn’t practicing medicine or talking politics, he enjoys swimming, playing soccer (when he coached his children’s soccer teams, he built a practice field in his side yard to make it easier for him to make it to practice), cheering on Dallas sports teams (particularly the Dallas Stars), weight training, skiing, and traveling.