



Anthony G. DeMartino, MD

City: Bronxville, NY

Date of Graduation from Medical School: 1957

Medical School Graduated From: SUNY – Downstate College of Medicine

Residency Location: New York

Specialty: Internal Medicine and Cardiovascular Disease

What factors influenced your decision to become a physician? There were a number of factors that influenced my decision to become a physician. When I was a young child and teenager, my father suffered from leukemia. He received multiple blood transfusions and was seriously ill for some time. It was incredibly difficult to watch my father suffer and it sparked my desire to become a physician to help other people. As a first generation Italian-American with limited income, I also wanted to pursue a career that would improve my family's financial well-being. I therefore worked continuously from the age of 13 until my medical school graduation so that I could earn money to achieve my goal.

Did you have any mentors or influential people in the course of your medical training or career who made an impact on you? I was fortunate to have a number of mentors throughout my training and career. Dean Pinkston provided me with guidance and encouragement during medical school. Dr. Ludwig Eichna, the Chairman of the Department of Medicine at Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York, encouraged me to pursue a fellowship in cardiology and provided guidance and contacts in the field. Dr. William Dock, a Professor Medicine at Downstate Medical Center, also was quite influential. He was a renowned cardiologist and the consummate professor. Dr. Daniel S. Lukas, the Director of the Cardiopulmonary Laboratory at the New York Hospital Cornell University Medical Center, encouraged me to conduct research projects and develop techniques in diagnostic and interventional cardiology.

Did you experience a defining moment that made you feel you had become a physician? The defining moment that made me feel that I had become a physician was when other physicians and their families chose me as their doctor.

As you were training to be a physician, what one piece of advice could you not have done without? I was advised to develop a strong foundation in internal medicine.

What advice would you give to medical students graduating in the class of 2007? I would give medical students the same advice I received – obtain a strong foundation in internal medicine which is the basis of the various medical subspecialties. Too many physicians are well-versed in trials and technical expertise, without having diagnostic acumen or the ability to apply the skills they have learned. I also would advise medical students to develop a strong foundation in molecular biology.

What is the most significant medical innovation you experienced in your years of practice? It is impossible to list just one medical innovation. Some of the most significant innovations include cardiac diagnostic procedures and treatments, CAT scans, and MRIs.

What regrets, if any, do you have about your medical career? Although I do not have regrets about my career, I am disappointed by a number of changes in the practice of medicine that have occurred over the past fifty years. First, I regret that there has been a lack of recognition of internal medicine as a true

specialty, especially since it is the basis of all of the medical subspecialties. This absence of recognition is evident in the income discrepancy between internal medicine and subspecialties. Insurance companies give greater rewards to the ability to conduct procedures, rather than to fundamental diagnostic skills. Doctors need to discuss pros and cons of screening with patients, but this requires significant patient counseling time that is not properly valued or reimbursed in our current system. Second, during the course of my career, I have seen physicians place a greater emphasis on test results alone, instead of using them in combination with a carefully obtained history and a thorough physical examination. Third, the introduction of managed-care organizations has eliminated the continuity of the doctor-patient relationship. Fourth, insurance carriers and the pharmaceutical industry have obtained an incredible amount of power in the health care arena – at the expense of consumers.

Is there one patient, situation or incident that stands out above all others in your career? One of my patients was dying in the intensive care unit, and I called the family to come to the hospital. When they family arrived, they asked me to join them as they held hands around their dying mother's bed and prayed at the moment of her death. It was incredibly touching that they included me in such a sad and intimate moment. I have treated multiple generations of families and I am blessed to have many close relationship with my patients.