

## SPS member profile: Michael L. Carius, MD, FACEP

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### November 2020 member spotlight



Michael L. Carius, MD, FACEP

#### **Emergency Medicine Stratford, Connecticut**

**Q: How have you managed to stay positive during the COVID-19 pandemic?** A: Although I have become frustrated by the relative restrictions imposed by the pandemic just like everyone else, I really have remained fairly positive throughout.

I attribute this to three things:

- I have continued to run every day, which gives me tremendous relief from the daily stressors and a welcome sense of physical well-being.
- Since I no longer have any administrative responsibilities to distract me, I now have more time to listen to, appreciate and enjoy the patients I care for.

- I have become very philosophical about my own potential illness and mortality, so, although I do not take unnecessary risks in this new environment, I am not afraid of being infected, which gives me tremendous relief from worry. Parenthetically, I was asked if I wanted to be exempted from patient care at the beginning of this pandemic because of my age—I responded to the contrary that I have lived a very rewarding and eventful life and that I was in a better position to potentially get infected than my younger colleagues with young families and whole careers ahead of them.

**Q: How has an infectious disease outbreak affected your family—both physically and emotionally—and what would you suggest helping other families cope?** A: Like many families, the greatest impact on our family has been the restrictions on travel to see each other and the resulting relative isolation. These restrictions have also, unfortunately, limited contact with friends, who are usually so supportive. Fortunately, my wife, who is a medical professional, shares my philosophy and attitude in this pandemic. Our daily conversations have been a tremendous source of understanding, comfort and advice. I believe that coping with the physical and emotional fallouts from the pandemic can be achieved with a positive attitude, regular exercise, patience and acceptance of the things we cannot change.

**Q: Is there a specific story of hope and resilience from a COVID-19 survivor that you would like to share to help dispel fear?** A: I actually cared for the second patient in Connecticut to be diagnosed and then hospitalized with the COVID-19 virus. She was a nurse with whom I worked. She was ultimately hospitalized a second time. But she has persevered and survived and is again working. Every time that I see her we reminisce about that relatively naive awkward day I cared for her when there really was very little in the way of PPE and no real fear about the pandemic that was just beginning. Her story gives me confidence that we are doing the right things and hope that we will all get through this thing together and that the future will be brighter.

**Q: In your opinion, what efforts are needed to coordinate long-term health and well-being of physicians through COVID-19?**



Dr. Carius with his wife.

A: We must first recognize that this is a very real and potentially dangerous infectious disease and that we must do all those things to minimize its spread that many of our generation have become all too lax about, such as frequent hand washing and covering our mouths when we cough and not going to work when we are sick.

Secondly, we must pay attention to our own physical and emotional needs, including adequate rest and nutrition, and seek appropriate help when we don't feel well and are potentially in danger. A wise old friend once told me that a physician who has him- or herself as a patient has a fool for a patient, and I believe that. We need to trust our colleagues to help us when needed. Thirdly, we need to frequently get out of the house and the office and do something in the fresh air, be it with exercise or simply observing the wonderful nature all around us; it is amazing how even a brief 10-minute escape outdoors can revitalize a slumping and weary psyche and body. And lastly, we need to have the faith and confidence that this pandemic, like other disasters before it, too, will pass and that we are, in the end, survivors.

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