Why doctors marry doctors: Exploring medical marriages

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About 80% of physicians are married, according to a recent online survey, and these doctors often marry other doctors or other health professionals.

One in four women physicians are married to doctors, and 16% of male doctors are married to physicians, says a survey of more than 15,000 physicians in 29 specialties that was published on the Medscape news website. Meanwhile, 35% of male doctors are married to nonphysician health professionals, and 11% of women physicians are married to such health professionals.

Find out more about why physicians are marrying within health care, but first here are three great reads on the topic medical marriage and romance.

Key tips for dating a medical student
Medical students may face particular relationship challenges if their significant other doesn’t have firsthand experience with juggling the unique demands of medical school. If this sounds familiar, reference these key insights for a successful relationship from the partner of a medical school graduate.

How to balance the two-physician family
One private practice physician offers her six tips for making the hectic life of a two-doctor family work well for everyone involved. When private practice began, life took a turn. “Throw in a new community, a mortgage and a baby. Lots of changes had to occur.”
The power of the kitchen table consult
The fight against burnout takes on many forms. AMA members Hans Arora, MD, PhD, and Kavita Shah Arora, MD, a physician couple with a passion for organized medicine, find it works best with a partner on the front lines. Call it a consult or a sidebar, physicians often ask each other for advice. What’s different about when Hans and Kavita Arora are doing it is that it often takes place across the dinner table.

Here's why doctors often wind up marrying other doctors, nurses or other health professionals.

Increased time together in the workplace
Many physicians will often marry other health professionals because of life timing and availability, said one emergency physician who married a pediatric oncologist.

“The times in your life when you’re seeking a partner happen to coincide very nicely with the time you’re in medical school and training,” the emergency physician said. “It’s a huge chunk of life, and your social circles revolve around that.”

Working long hours with friends at the hospital, especially during residency, may also stoke the flames for a new romance.

“All of my friends in the area were from work,” a female surgical resident said. “It came as no surprise to me that most of the people who worked there, dated there.”

The surgical resident began dating a nurse, who is now her husband.

Shared experience
Two-physician families often face more of a juggling act than one-physician families, but generally succeed due to an increased understanding of their struggles and maintaining open communication. Some physicians report that they enjoy having a companion who shares their perspective and passion for medicine.

“As doctors, your lives are so incredibly busy that it’s hard to meet people outside medicine and when
you do, it’s hard to explain why you really need to work on Christmas or go in at 2 a.m. for a delivery,” said Dr. Kavita Shah Arora, an ob-gyn at Case Western Reserve University’s MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland.

“When you’re with someone in medicine, you have that shared language and experience,” said Dr. Arora. “You share the same set of values when it comes to helping others and sometimes needing to put your responsibility as a physician above your relationship’s needs.”

**Challenges for physicians to consider**

While many physicians have found love and compromise among their colleagues, entering a relationship with someone in the health care profession has its challenges.

For one, if you and your partner have children, finding reliable child care that accommodates the schedules of two busy physicians can be difficult. It’s also hard to strike work-life balance as a couple, Dr. Arora said, adding that having “your heart and soul wrapped up in your patients” can really strain a relationship—“unless one also works just as hard at the relationship.”

And while many doctors have found comfort in their shared traits, being too similar has its disadvantages too. Physicians are used to being the ultimate deciders. But at home, married to another physician, that is not the case.

Find more resources for physician families and relationships at the AMA Alliance website and with *Physician Family*, the AMA Alliance’s quarterly magazine.