

Alumnus Profile

10 Questions with...Charles J. Dunton, MD '80

Charles Dunton believes that at some point in your life you should give back. After beginning his OBGYN residency at Lankenau Medical Center Dunton decided he wanted to care for seriously ill women—specifically, women with cancer. He finished his residency and completed an oncology fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania.

He decided to give even more when the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists contacted him last year with an offer to join a volunteer effort to teach in Honduras through the organization Health Volunteers Overseas, or HVO. “The idea of teaching local healthcare providers, rather than just

seeing patients, made a lot of sense to me,” Dunton says.

During his week-long trip to Honduras this past August, Dunton was impressed with the high level of knowledge the healthcare providers had but surprised by their inability to deliver the best medicine because of social constraints. “They don’t have the screenings we have, so you see a lot of advanced cancers,” he says. “We had to go back in time, think how we treated patients 30 to 40 years ago, and make do with what we had.”

With about 2.1 million women at risk, it’s estimated there are more than 3,300 cases of cervical cancer in Honduras,

representing 40 percent of cancer in the nation. If the United States experienced similar rates, we would see more than 150,000 cases of cervical each year. Instead, due to screening and treatment, there are only about 12,000 U.S. cases annually.

Since returning home, Dunton has remained involved with the Honduran physicians he met, talking to them via Skype in a monthly tumor board. He also hosted a Honduran physician who came in April to observe him at Lankenau, where he’s now director of gynecologic oncology. Dunton says HVO is constantly in need of healthcare professionals in all fields to train their counterparts in foreign countries.



Photo by Sabina Pierce.

Dunton answers 10 questions about his career.

1. What don't people know about your field that you wish they did?

The importance of HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccines in prevention of cervical cancer. There needs to be more widespread use.

2. What advice would you give to your 25-year-old self?

Make sure to study basics well so you don't have to relearn them.

3. If you weren't a physician, what would you be?

A writer.

4. What is your biggest pet peeve?

People who get on the elevator without letting you off first.

5. What's on your bucket list?

To write a book and visit Sweden — I've always wanted to visit Scandinavia.

6. If you had a theme song, what would it be?

"Mr. Bad Example" by Warren Zevon.

7. Describe yourself in three words.

Dedicated, funny, family man.
I have a son and a daughter, McCrea and Brittany.

8. What is the proudest moment in your career?

Graduation from JMC with my parents.

9. What is the most adventurous thing you have ever done?

Sailed the Caribbean during medical school with five other 1980 graduates.

10. What gets you out of bed in the morning?

The mortgage and tuition payments!

— Elizabeth Seasholtz