

# Alumnus Profile

## 10 Questions with...

## Nicholas Ruggiero II, MD '01

From a young age, Nick Ruggiero remembers making house calls with his father, a cardiologist, who told him the best part of being a physician was forming relationships with your patients. "We'd go see a patient, give them a shot of Lasix if they were in heart failure, and then sit and have coffee with the family at the kitchen table while waiting to see how the patient did," Ruggiero recalls. "I loved it."

When it came time to choose a medical school, Jefferson was a natural choice — his father, Nicholas, is a 1966 graduate, along with his uncle Richard Soricelli, MD '60, and cousin Aimee Soricelli, MD '96. After initially thinking he wanted to specialize in orthopaedics, Ruggiero decided to follow in his father's footsteps and pursue cardiology. He completed an internal medicine residency, chief medical residency and a three-year general cardiology fellowship at Jefferson then went on to complete two fellowships at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston in vascular interventions and structural heart disease.

Coming back to Jefferson after his fellowships, Ruggiero joined the catheterization laboratory. Now the director of structural heart disease and non-coronary interventions, he works to expand the scope of the lab, predominantly treating

peripheral vascular disease, valvular heart disease and structural heart disease, specifically valve implantations. "The big thing I've been working on for past two years is getting the percutaneous valve program up and running," he says. "Instead of opening the chest to do valve implantation, we can now do it through a catheter in the groin."

Although his consultations are not happening around the kitchen table like his father's, Ruggiero says patient interactions are "hands down" the best part of his job. "Patients come in and tell you their entire life stories, and they bring cute things for you, like rosary beads, tiny plates from places they've visited, cards, notes," he says. "Those things, along with watching them get better, are worth all that we do."

### Ruggiero answers 10 questions about his career:

1. **If you could work for a year in any location in the world, where would you do it?**  
I would love to give a year back to my hometown: Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Growing up there made me who I am today.
2. **If you weren't a physician, what would you be?**  
Wine-maker/grape-grower/farmer. Our family has been making wine for more than 20 years.

### 3. **Describe your time as a JMC student in one sentence.**

Some of the best years of my life.

### 4. **What was the most fun you ever had in your career?**

My intern year, everything in medicine was new. Even little things like writing an order in the chart seemed like a major accomplishment.

### 5. **What is your biggest pet peeve?**

A loss of dedication to patients and quality in medicine predominantly due to time constraints.

### 6. **What do you daydream about?**

New inventions and procedures — and owning a winery someday!

### 7. **If you had a theme song, what would it be?**

"Thunderstruck" by AC/DC. I wake up to it every morning.

### 8. **What gets you out of bed in the morning?**

The challenge of the job, the chance to help others and the curiosity of what will happen every day.

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

Interventional cardiology is rapidly expanding. We no longer treat only coronary lesions — we are performing valve implantations, fixing congenital defects and complex peripheral vascular interventions.

### 10. **Who's your personal hero?**

My dad. He started from impoverished beginnings, worked his way through school and honorably served his country. He loves his patients and his profession, but still has time to be a loving husband and great father. That's a hero in my book.

