

Rebecca Clearman M.D. - her life story

I am the daughter of an engineer and an artist, from a family of educators, farmers and other gentle professions. As a child I was groomed for life as a concert pianist, until the need to wear a spine brace as a teenager stopped that path. I attended college in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas. To make ends meet I worked full-time all through college; hospital work fit my class schedule. I became fascinated with medicine and realized I wanted to devote my life to the Art of Medicine.

My college advisor counseled me not to change to Pre-Med; Nursing was more appropriate for me. After two years in Nursing School, I married my childhood sweetheart and changed to a Pre-Med major: two of the best decisions I have ever made.

After my acceptance at Baylor College of Medicine I came to the Texas Medical Center in 1979. I completed both medical school and specialty training at Baylor Affiliated Hospitals, which include Methodist, St. Luke's, Texas Children's Hospital, The Institute for Rehabilitation & Research (TIRR), Ben Taub, The Veteran's Administration Hospital and the old Jefferson Davis Hospital. My next academic position at Baylor was as faculty at TIRR. I pioneered the Musculoskeletal Program at TIRR Hospital and the outpatient programs through TIRR Rehabilitation Centers, ran the Arthritis Program and treated Catastrophic/Trauma and Brain and Spinal Cord Injury patients. At Baylor, I trained doctors in Musculoskeletal Medicine, and established the Musculoskeletal fellowship program at there. In 1993 I left Baylor for the University of Texas, to serve as Vice Chairman of the new academic department, and anchor the new Rehabilitation Program at Hermann Hospital.

I enjoyed the teaching, traveling and speaking nationally and internationally, and the success and growth of the programs I started. I was doing the New Medicine - seeing more patients in less time. Soon I was following nearly 5,000 patients in my clinical practice. Like my colleagues, I was dancing as fast as I could.

In 1995, I was asked to consult with doctors treating the Saudi Royal Family; after several months of commuting across the USA every weekend, I took a year's leave of absence to serve as the Director of Rehabilitation for a Princess Al Anoud Al Saud.

My experiences with the Queen and Royal Family were life changing for me. I saw that it was possible to deliver an exquisite level of medical care that allows patients

to be in control and fully informed. However, a paradigm shift is required: the doctor must work for the patient and not for any other entity.

When I returned to the Medical Center, I sought a position at UT - MD Anderson Cancer Center. I could not resist the opportunity to help build their Cancer Rehabilitation Program and start a complex wound clinic. I am proud to have received the prestigious Clinical Achievement Award from the Baylor / UT Alliance in recognition of that work.

Despite the joys of working for these fine institutions, I found myself longing for enough time to really get to know my patients and their families, make house calls, do bedside vigils or anything else that would help. I wanted to give a superior level of care to my everyday patients - not just to a Queen.

At the end of 1999, I followed my dream: I left UT - MD Anderson to start a private practice that embodied this concept. By working only for the patient (thus the term Personal Physician), I now have time to care for and about my patients. A friend calls my practice "Back to the Future of Medicine" because in many ways it is a return to the old days of the family doctor who made house calls. Nothing has been more satisfying in my medical career.