



fellow

SPOTLIGHT:

CAESAR K. LUO, MD, FCPP

Fellow since November 2016



What initially interested you about joining the College?

My father, Dr. Solomon Luo, has always been my role model. He came to Philadelphia for his ophthalmology residency and quickly ascended the ranks of the medical leaders in the area. He was inducted into The College of Physicians in 1991, and my interest has grown ever since. I first visited the Mütter Museum as an intern at Albert Einstein Medical Center with a passing interest in the history of medicine. Once exposed to the College, this interest grew quickly into fascination with all the College offers to the academic community. As a resident at Wills Eye Hospital, we were treated to several events a year at the College, the George E. de Schweinitz Memorial Lecture and Dinner and the Edmund Spaeth Oration. Each captivating experience left me eventually seeking Fellowship into the College.

When did you become a Fellow?

I was inducted into the College on November 11, 2016. I was honored to be inducted alongside Dr. Bruce Markovitz, a longtime mentor and friend.

Tell us a bit about your practice and the work you do.

I am an ophthalmologist with a specialization in vitreoretinal surgery, a challenging subspecialty that teaches me something new every day. I feel fortunate to practice in a subspecialty where no

two days are the same, with both surgical and medical conundrums. I work at Progressive Vision Institute, a large community based multispecialty ophthalmology group that my father started in 1987 in Pottsville, PA. As a community practice, we feel a strong desire to provide quality care to an underserved population in Schuylkill County. I also grew up in Schuylkill County, so bringing my training back to the area where I grew up has been a source of joy and pride. In addition to my father, I am also fortunate to work with both of my sisters, Betsy and Stella, and my wife Melissa in the same practice, which has been an incredibly close and rewarding job environment.

What initially drew you to ophthalmology as a specialty?

A happy physician father with happy patients drew me to ophthalmology. I went to medical school convinced I would choose oncology or pediatrics, yet with each rotation I kept remembering how my father's patients would cry with joy with restoration of their vision. I then read a quality of life survey that reported patients would rather lose an arm than their eyesight, and I realized that sight is such a vital part of an individual's perception of self and worth. This convinced me that ophthalmology was the right fit for me.

I read that you studied and performed as a classical pianist. The interaction between medicine and the arts is an area much explored by lectures and events at the College. For you, how are the two fields similar and how do they differ? Did one prepare you for the other?

The connection between medicine and the arts grows ever more fascinating. Not only are there valuable skills one develops as an artist, but I believe health and healing are in themselves art forms that rely not on right and wrong but nuanced, balanced strokes of interpretation. My musical background affected my medical career in numerous ways. Vitreoretinal surgery calls for ambidextrous technique, a tool that I trained over many hours on the piano. An aspect of musical performance that benefits surgeons is confidence in oneself. The reason we practice music is to perform without thought, and immersion in the moment. Surgery is a performance of sorts, with training and practice allowing us to proceed appropriately in front of an audience of one, the patient. We can never achieve perfection, but the practice of music and medicine allows us to grow ever better.

As much as I loved piano performance, my experience at Eastman School of Music was instrumental in influencing my career path towards medicine. The requisite nomadic lifestyle of a professional musician was challenging. Family is paramount to me, and music may have made that difficult. The inherent structure of medical training in addition to the relative stable lifestyle of a practicing physician convinced me to pursue medicine. I realized that I could always be a doctor that played piano as a hobby, but I could never be a pianist that played doctor on the side.

What upcoming College lecture or event are you most anticipating?

I am looking forward to attending one of the Philadelphia Orchestra chamber concert series. We are incredibly fortunate to have one of the great orchestras of the world right here in our fair city. Chamber music is the most intimate form of orchestral work. Coupled with the opulence of the College and I believe we are all in for a remarkable evening.

Tell us about one of your favorite items in the Library or the Museum.

What first brought me to the Mütter Museum was the [toxic megacolon](#). It is a disease that every medical student studies, but few medical students actually see. To see the toxic megacolon in pathologic mounting was a kind of validation of my medical school studies, proof that the esoteric and the unbelievable are quite tangible, literally. As physicians we stand on the shoulders of giants, and the toxic megacolon is demonstrable proof. ■



This colon belonged to a 29-year-old man who had complained of constipation for most of his life. The condition he endured is known as congenital aganglionic megacolon, or Hirschsprung's disease.