

The Life of a Radiologist

Since my early years of high school I recall a pronounced aspiration to be employed in the medical field. High school medical courses introduced me into an exclusive world of improving, healing, and altering the lives of millions through my personal passion; I concluded that my dream career is to become a radiologist. Just the idea of walking through the frigid hospital as patients, nurses, and visitors recognize my devotion to medicine by the vivid white coat draped over my scrubs with the perfectly embroidered letters, “M.D.” after my name brings tears to my eyes as I only can only imagine the day all of my hard work finally pays off. While most patients tend to overlook the position of a radiologist due to behind the scenes diagnosing that radiologists are usually subdued to, Dr. Cynthia Long, M.D. of Baylor Grapevine Hospital offers insight into the actuality of being a radiologist.

Standing five-foot seven in spotless navy blue scrubs hidden under a glistening white lab coat with black cursive words, Dr. Cynthia Long explains, “I did not pursue an interest in radiology until after changing my college major several times.” This expresses the idea that although one may not know their future career right as they enter college a professional career is still obtainable. Throughout her four years of undergraduate school, she explored careers in a variety of fields such as public relations, registered nursing, and even business but often found that she was uninterested in the idea of being employed in a career that she could potentially lose passion for. After researching a multitude of career options, she decided it would be in her best interest to follow in the footsteps of her immediate family and attend the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Medicine to become a medical doctor. While attending medical school, she explored numerous specialty careers in medicine that required additional extensive

training through residency and fellowship programs: “Finally, by my second year in medical school I knew I wanted to become an Interventional Radiologist.”

Graduating in 1988, Dr. Cynthia Long now has 26 years of experience and is board certified in radiology. Establishing a professional career by the age of 28, Dr. Long expressed her choice in radiology as “the best decision I could have made for myself.” While being a doctor in general requires an immense amount of time, the joy of being a radiologist is “the leniency I had to create a family.” This aspect of being able to work a professional career while being a mother and wife is a quality that is hard to accomplish when employed in medicine and is one of the main reasons radiology is such a desirable department to myself as well as other individuals seeking the same opportunities.

Although Dr. Long is also employed by a local outpatient clinic, a typical week at Baylor Grapevine Hospital for Dr. Long would consist of reading, annotating, and diagnosing X-Ray, CT, and MRI images taken by radiology technologists as well as performing numerous scheduled procedures that vary throughout the week. Dr. Long performs various minimally invasive procedures such as “angiographies, stent grafting, organ biopsies, and intravascular ultrasounds” to patients suffering from conditions such as “coronary artery disease, jaundice, or overall life-threatening irregularities in blood flow.” These procedures are performed using a variety of technological machines, surgical dyes, and medical equipment that precisely guide Dr. Long through the entire operation.

While shadowing Dr. Long, I experienced a sit in on a two-hour procedure in which a transjugular biopsy of the liver was taken from a patient who was diagnosed as Jaundice. Jaundice can be the result of “blood or liver diseases, genetic syndromes, blockage of bile ducts, or infections” (Medline). The operation was initiated by creating a small incision into the

patient's neck. Upon the incision, a long needle with a small opening at the end for the sample to be collected was inserted into the hepatic vein. The direction of the needle was sought out by an x-ray angiography in addition to an ultrasound to determine the size of the liver. After the procedure was complete, the radiology technologist who assisted Dr. Long through the operation brought the biopsy into the monitoring room and as I closely examined the sample it looked similar to long shavings from a pencil eraser, but was in fact two thin vertical pieces of the patient's actual liver. This experience deepened my passion for radiology in a way that I personally did not think was possible.

As my time with Dr. Long came to an end I could not thank her enough for all the extremely valuable information that she allowed me to observe. I truly can say that this first hand experience gave me a new outlook on my future career and only persuades me more to strive to become a Radiologist. The last bit of advice that Dr. Long gave me was something I will never forget, "Nothing worth it ever comes easy, but being so young and knowing exactly what you need to do to obtain your goal already puts you ten steps ahead." Although, it will not in the least bit be easy I know for a fact that it will be well worth all of the time, money, and dedication that it takes to achieve this professional career. Simply knowing that radiology is exactly where I belong in medicine inspires and motivates me more to be the best possible candidate for medical school, residency, and fellowship so that without a doubt I will reach my ultimate career goals.

Works Cited

- "Jaundice: MedlinePlus." *U.S National Library of Medicine*. U.S. National Library of Medicine, n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2014.
- Long, Cynthia A. "The Life of a Radiologist." Personal interview. 25 Apr. 2014.