

DARTMOUTH MEDICINE

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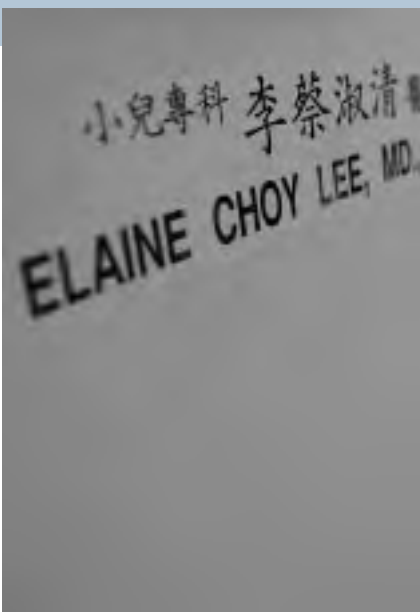


**Say "Aaaah":
Shedding light
on culturally
sensitive care**



“I won’t quit till I’m a star on Broadway, on Broadway,” sang the Drifters in 1963. A decade later, that refrain rang true for a pair of aspiring doctors who were determined to return to New York City to practice among the people they’d grown up with. Today, both are graduates of DMS and they have offices at opposite ends of Broadway.

On Broadway . . .



**Photographs by Patrick Saine
Text by Cathy Shufro**

Patrick Saine, the director of ophthalmic photography at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and an instructor of ophthalmology at Dartmouth Medical School, is also a widely exhibited art photographer. A series of “digital quilts” that he created from retinal angiographs was the subject of the cover feature in the Summer 2000 issue of this magazine, and he contributed a photo-essay about a medical mission to Trinidad to the Fall 2001 issue. One of his images was also recently chosen for inclusion in an international juried exhibit titled “Images from Science,” sponsored by the School of Photographic Arts and Sciences at the Rochester Institute of Technology. He has worked at DHMC since 1997. The text accompanying Saine’s images in this article was written by Cathy Shufro. A freelancer based in southern Connecticut, she is a tutor-in-writing at Yale University and also writes regularly for *Yale Medicine* magazine.

From lower Manhattan's TriBeCa—where pediatrician Elaine Choy Lee, M.D., sees patients in a converted apartment—if you head north on Broadway for almost 200 blocks, you'll eventually come to the 185th Street office where Juanita Jenyons, M.D., practices obstetrics and gynecology. Though both are graduates of Dartmouth Medical School (Lee is a '79 and Jenyons a '78), the two women appear at first glance to be otherwise quite different. In Lee's office, just a block from the lively streets of Chinatown, the conversation is generally in Cantonese, while Jenyons speaks Spanish to the patients at her office in a Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights.

But what seems to distinguish the two women also suggests what they have in common: both are working among people with whom they grew up, talking to patients in their native languages. Both are also the daughters of immigrant parents who themselves had little formal education; Lee and Jenyons reached this point against the odds—finding their way into medicine without the kind of encouragement and connections often offered to those who aspire to be doctors. And when they left the city to study in New Hampshire, both were determined to return home.

Lee's father arrived in the United States by jumping off a ship near Boston. Goon Duck Choy, who eventually owned three restaurants in New York, had been born in a village near Guangzhou, China, and was expelled from the U.S. twice. On one of these unplanned trips home, he married Lee's mother, a seamstress who never learned to read—in Chinese or English. Lee's father gained citizenship by fighting in World War II and settled in New York, and Lee grew up on the Lower East Side. She attended the Bronx High School of Science and won a New York State Regents' Scholarship to attend Skidmore College. There, she majored in biology and philosophy and decided to become a high-school science teacher because it would be a stable job. "Nobody told me I should be a doctor," Lee recalls.

But she found that she didn't like teaching, and eventually she realized that medicine would allow her to use her interest in science for the benefit of the Chinese-American community. "I always intended to come back to Chinatown," Lee says. She is now on the clinical faculty at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons and runs her practice in partnership with her husband, Chuck Wing Lee, a nurse practitioner. They have two sons.

Jenyons's route into medicine was also bumpy, though a bit more direct. Born in the Dominican Republic, she decided to be a doctor—an obstetrician—at age 7 or 8, when a relative in the countryside died during childbirth. She was 10 when her family moved to Spanish Harlem after her father lost his job in Santo Domingo. He found a job polishing silver in a New York hotel and eventually ran the silver room. Her mother did factory work. Neither completed high school, and they discouraged Jenyons from imagining she could be a doctor. "They thought it was too big a leap. People wanted to be realistic. My father said, 'Why don't you become a nurse?'" So did the teachers at her vocational high school, so Jenyons trained there as a licensed practical nurse.

She then used her L.P.N. credentials to finance her premedical studies at Queens College. At Dartmouth, away from home for the first time, Jenyons found strong support from a cohesive group of minority students.

She runs her practice with a partner, working from two offices—one in midtown, across from the American Museum of Natural History on West 77th Street, and the other way uptown, in Washington Heights. She is also a senior attending physician at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center and an assistant clinical professor at Columbia. Jenyons and her husband, economist Rafael Escano, have three sons.

When photographer Patrick Saine shot the images for this photo-essay during a week in mid-July of 2002, he brought the two women together for the first time in more than 20 years. Lee and Jenyons remembered each other from medical school, but they had never crossed paths in New York City. Enjoying a reunion over Dominican food, they reminisced about their experiences at Dartmouth, about the ways in which they have lived amazingly parallel lives, and about their practices "on Broadway . . ."



Jenyons has two offices—one on the Upper West Side and the other way uptown, in a neighborhood of Washington Heights (pictured above) where many residents are Dominican.

Lee's office is only eight blocks from the site of the World Trade Center. She says there are lots of small businesses in the area, but that "since September 11th, they're not doing so well."





The consultation room at Jenyons's uptown office—at Broadway and 185th—looks out on a middle-school playground.



Jenyons uses the annual gynecological examination to educate her patients. "I like to know 'Are they exercising?' 'Are they taking calcium?'" She urges patients who smoke to stop, asking them to sign a form committing themselves to giving up cigarettes. She follows up a week later with a phone call to ask, "Have you really quit?"

During routine checkups with her pediatric patients, Lee asks about diet, bowels, sleep patterns, and hobbies. With her teenage patients, she also discusses dating, drinking, smoking, sexual activity, and computer use. "There's a lot of talking," says Lee, pictured here with five-year-old Karen Lo and her mother. In addition to chatting, Lee checks Karen's breathing (below, left) and palpates her spleen (below, right).

After examining five-year-old Alexandra Epstein, Lee sits down (below) and advises her not to turn cartwheels in the street. The girl's exuberance has led to a sore shoulder and neck. While she's at it, Lee discusses good nutrition with her young patient.





All of Jenyons's patients have private insurance, but the majority of her uptown patients and a third of those at her West 77th Street office have incomes low enough to qualify them for food subsidies through the federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program—which is promoted above on a Spanish-language poster.

The patients at Jenyons's uptown office (pictured above) are 95 percent Latina, while just under half of the patients at her other office are Latina. Although many are bilingual, Jenyons says most prefer to speak Spanish. "It's their native language."

Fast food is ubiquitous, even on the streets of Chinatown near Lee's office. It's not necessary to understand Cantonese to realize that Lee talks disparagingly about burgers and fries to her patients. "These are American-born kids," she says, acknowledging the difficulty of conveying the message. "I always talk about not eating so many McDonald's. I try to talk about fruits and vegetables and that this is high-fat."

Making a circle with her fingers, Lee demonstrates the shape of a red blood cell as she discusses anemia with Jackie Lee and her daughters, Emily and Tiffany Yu.





Sussanna Valdivinog has come in with her partner for a six-month prenatal checkup. Top, Jenyons reviews Valdivinog's chart before starting the exam. Next, in the lower photo above, Jenyons measures her fundus and tells Valdivinog, "It's growing!"

Tiffany Yu braves an immunization (below) while her little sister rummages in her mother's purse. Sunday is Lee's busiest day. She offers Sunday hours because it's the only free day for many families in her practice. Her patients come from Brooklyn, Queens, New Jersey, and Connecticut—and sometimes even phone her for advice if a child falls ill while the family is vacationing back in China.



Hearing the fetal heart is a moving experience for all mothers-to-be, according to Jenyons. "People love it. It makes the baby real. Especially the first time, some people cry. I'm an obstetrician," she adds, "and I cried the first time for each of my three kids." Here, using a Doppler ultrasound instrument, Jenyons records the brisk heart-beat of a healthy fetus—120 to 160 beats per minute.

Lee greets baby Samantha, cradled in the arms of her father, Tak Wong (below). Samantha's big brother, Ryan, and the children's mother, Teresa Wong, look on.





Jenyons counsels expectant parents about what to anticipate in the months ahead and gives them some advice: sign up for childbirth classes and practice the breathing patterns that can help to reduce labor pain. And she tells the mother no more sleeping on her back—the uterus is getting big enough to block the blood flow.

Jenyons is interested in alternative or complementary approaches to gynecologic care and the management of menopause and has been a pioneer in allowing her patients to choose water births, in which the mother labors and gives birth in a water-filled tub.

Teresa Wong points out a discoloration in the white of three-year-old Ryan's eye (below, left). "I have one, too," Lee tells her. "It's nothing to worry about." Later, Lee takes a look at a rash on three-year-old Jasmine Hui's arm while her mother, Sau Leung, holds baby Jenna (below, center).

Lee explains that if a baby's parents are illegal immigrants, they sometimes will send the baby back to China to live with grandparents because they can't afford child care. "Illegal immigrants borrow thousands and thousands of dollars to pay their passage," Lee says. "They probably owe money to everyone in the village. It's nice that they have a U.S. citizen just born, but they have to work."





Jenyons says many gynecologists today don't even own a microscope. But she likes to examine the organisms that cause vaginitis herself, to distinguish among yeast, bacteria, and *Trichomonis* protozoa. "Sometimes you have a mixed infection," she says.

Lee says that new mothers get "kicked out" of the hospital so quickly today that "there isn't even enough time to develop a question." So she fills the gap by seeing infants frequently—within a few days of their arrival home and then once a month for the first six months. Pictured below with Lee are nine-month-old Nicholas Zhen and his father, Song Hai Zhen, and mother, Janet Tan.

Jenyons's office is a busy place. In the right photo, L.P.N. Carla Cavarallo, front, checks a patient's chart, while medical assistant Jennifer Ortiz, rear, looks at a lab result.

Janet Tan distracts Nicholas with a toy camera. He'll get three shots today, including for polio. He's already been immunized against hepatitis B, which is common in Chinatown. Before that vaccine became available in 1981, when Lee was still a resident, she knew a baby who died of the disease after being infected at birth. The hepatitis B vaccine, she says, "is one thing in my medical lifetime that I think is wonderful."





Here, medical assistant Jennifer Ortiz weighs Diana Barbaran, who was expecting her baby in about a month. (Barbaran gave birth to a baby girl on August 14 and named her Nicole. She says that Jenyons encouraged her to walk during most of the seven in-hospital hours that she was in labor and never left her side.)

"I give my own shots, which most [pediatricians] don't," explains Lee. "It's something I've always done. It's a small office." Nicholas, now crying (below), sits on his father's lap. Because Lee's office is open on Sundays, both he and Nicholas's mother are able to come to their son's checkups. Speaking in both Cantonese and English, they ask Lee her opinion of some herbal remedies advocated by the baby's grandmother.



Jenyons uses the Doppler to check Barbaran's baby. Barbaran emigrated from Peru and does not speak much English, so appreciates the fact that Jenyons speaks Spanish.

Lee "really cares about her patients," says Janet Tan. Once, when Nicholas fell and had to go to the hospital, Lee waited for a middle-of-the-night phone call to make sure he was all right. Such situations are "the most stressful part of being a pediatrician," she says. "When an ambulance whisks the family off to the nearest ER, they have to put their child's care in the hands of strangers, and they call me. I try very hard to reach them at the hospital, and to talk with them and the treating physicians. These are, after all, my babies, and I'll need to know what follow-up will be needed."





Above, Jenyons phones a patient, with the patient's chart handy, to let her know the result of a recent test. The L.P.N. in her office makes routine calls, but "some results, I do," says Jenyons. "It depends on the problem."

Jenyons also works with residents at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital; in the lower photo above, she chats with, from the left, Jennifer Ashton, Shonda Corbett, and Esther Moon.

Lee's husband, Chuck Wing Lee, a nurse practitioner, works with her. "It's a real luxury and a pleasure to have someone else medical in an office," explains Elaine Lee. "It's good to have a partner if you're worried about something and you're not sure—to get another perspective, listen to a chest, look at a rash. We work very well together," she adds. Below, Chuck Lee hands a chart to his wife as a visit begins. (Note that the clock on the office wall bears the Dartmouth shield.)

In for her annual checkup is 14-year-old Lisa Kuan. "She's an adolescent," Lee explains, "so Mom is not in the room for most of it." Lee counsels teenagers like Kuon to be wary of contacts made on the Internet. "I say this *ad nauseam*. I'm worried they will go places online that they shouldn't go and meet people they shouldn't. I talk about how many hours they're on the computer, I talk about posture [at the keyboard], because these people are going to be computer people for the next 60 years."





Jenyons and Ashton, who is in her third year as an obstetrics resident, check the hospital's patient board (above). Later (above, right), Jenyons discusses the ultrasound reading for a 37-week fetus with Moon.

Lee has what she calls "a tradition" of hiring high-school students. They begin in 10th grade and stay until they graduate, helping out as receptionists, clerical workers, and medical assistants. Below, Xiao Lee, a senior at Brooklyn Technical High School, helps Lee update a chart as (from the left) Queenie Cheung, Marie Liao, and Amy Lee look on (neither Lee is a relation). Two of Lee's former high-school workers are now in medical school, one became a physician assistant, and several are in nursing school.



Lee's stethoscope (below) is decorated with jewelry in the shape of a gourd. Dried hollow gourds are used in China to hold medicine. She values the charm partly as a means to distract children and partly "for good luck or good karma, and a wish that everybody will be well." More than 90 percent of her patients are Chinese. She says that "even if everybody speaks perfect English, they want me to speak Chinese. It's just more comfortable." But though Chinese is her own native language, Lee says she still needs a Chinese-English dictionary because "I'm U.S.-born, and I studied all Western stuff. Sometimes I don't know how to say 'immunoglobulin'" in Chinese. She's not trained in the use of medicinal herbs but acknowledges that many Chinese families use them. She warns against ones she knows to be potentially harmful—those that may be contaminated with poisons like lead, mercury, and arsenic, for example.





Jenyons settles in for a long night at the hospital. She and the residents get to choose their dinner from a spectrum of cuisines available in the neighborhood—Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican. Jenyons is treating them tonight (top).

Lee (left, below) draws some blood from toddler Bryce Garey with help from her husband, while Bryce's mother, Christine Liu, comforts her unhappy son.



Jenyons is also planning a prenatal program for St. Luke's that will reach out to Spanish-speaking women, including those without insurance. Her focus will be education: "about health, about taking care of themselves, about not waiting for a problem to occur but preventing it from occurring." She'll share information with patients about weight control, nutrition, diabetes, high blood pressure, and exercise. "If you can empower women about good health practices, you've got the whole family," she says.

But most of her young patients, says Lee, "look forward to coming to see me. They tell me where their ouchies are. It's a chance to get very individualized attention."





From the residents' lounge at Roosevelt, Jenyons can look westward across 10th Avenue to the Hudson River and New Jersey, home for her and her husband, economist Rafael Escano. Jenyons's mother, Maria, lives with them, along with sons Ruben, 14, and Ivan, 12. Their oldest, 21-year-old Oscar, began college this fall after serving for three years in the Army (including a tour in Afghanistan).

Lee has customarily worked a short day on Thursdays to make time for her own children, sons Clement and Clinton. Now, they're both away at college, so Lee uses her spare time to go to the gym or to run (she completed half of the 2002 New York Marathon). The Lees recently moved from New Jersey to Queens.

Nearly 25 years after Lee and Jenyons last connected, while they were still students at Dartmouth Medical School, they are reunited (above) on a New York street corner. They recognize each other and then enjoy a meal together at a Dominican restaurant near Jenyons's uptown office (below): fish cooked in coconut milk, and *arroz con pollo* (chicken with rice). They agree that Dartmouth encouraged its graduates to consider careers in primary care and embraced unconventional students. "They didn't want to choose all standard-issue people," recalls Lee. ■

