

Chicago Top Doctor Attributes Success to Patient Focus

by John Fries

Each year, Chicago Magazine publishes an issue featuring the area's Top Doctors in a variety of specialties. Because the list is determined based on input from doctors across the area, the chosen few named are considered "physicians' physicians." Achieving Top Doctor status is highly impressive, and a testament to each physician's professional expertise and reputation.

Obstetrician and gynecologist Randall M Toig, M.D. has been named a Chicago Top Doctor for the past four years, most recently in the January 2004 issue, which listed only 350 physicians in 58 specialties. "It's an honor for me, and also for my patients," said Dr. Toig, Gold Coast Gynecology on North Lake Shore Drive in downtown Chicago, who has been in private practice for 22 years.

During that time, Toig has performed several thousand surgical procedures. He's also earned an outstanding reputation for the high quality of care he provides. In addition to the Chicago list, he's been included in the Castle Connolly Guide to America's Top Doctors, Chicago Metro Area 2002 and the 2002-2003 edition of the Guide to America's Top Obstetricians and Surgeons.

Last year, he was promoted to assistant professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology at the Northwestern University Medical School, on whose faculty he has served since 1982.

He attributes his success to maintaining a gynecology practice that is totally patient-focused. His philosophy, which appears on the home page of his website, says he is "committed to developing a healthy partnership with each patient, providing the highest quality care, fully presenting and discussing options, and facilitating my patients informed choices. This is what my patients deserve."

Toig does everything he can to minimize unnecessary anxiety and costs for his patients, and often, the need for hospitalization. "I perform a number of diagnostic and therapeutic procedures right in my office, which has state-of-the-art medical equipment and procedure rooms," he said. "For my patients, it's a very comfortable environment."

Toig was born in Highland Park, a quiet, leafy neighborhood in Pittsburgh's East End where the local landmark is the Pittsburgh Zoo. After attending nearby Shadyside Academy and Peabody High School, he received a full tennis scholarship from the University of Michigan and moved to Ann Arbor. While there, he played tennis on the university's NCAA Big Ten championship team.

After receiving a Bachelor's degree in zoology and anthropology from the University of Michigan, he returned home and attended the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. He earned his M.D. at Pitt, then moved to Chicago to serve his internship at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital and his residency at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Dr. Toig was selected chief resident by the chairman, full time faculty, private attending staff, and his peers.

While at Northwestern, his strong sense of responsibility to his patients laid the foundation for what later became his practice model. "I wanted to be available to them. I also wanted to cater to the needs of working women," he said.

He was the first gynecologist at the hospital to offer evening and Saturday hours. After completing his residency, the young physician continued taking the road less traveled by immediately opening a solo medical practice, rather than joining a group practice that would provide him with an opportunity to establish himself.

"It was 1982, and I borrowed \$250,000 from the bank at 24% interest," he said, "but I wanted to do it my way, with the needs and convenience of the patients as my top priority." No one else had evening and weekend hours, so I was very busy. I was getting a lot of self-referrals, so I knew I was doing the right thing.

Twenty-two years later, Toig continues to maintain a busy, yet highly satisfying solo practice. In addition to holding active medical staff status at Northwestern, he's a member of the medical staff at Prentice Women's Hospital.

On the personal side, he's a confirmed Chicagoan who lives with his wife and children in a house on the Gold Coast that's been designated as a historic landmark.

"It was built by a German beer baron for his daughter in 1894. It is one of the only original houses in the area that was never converted to apartments, and then reconverted to a single family home." He fell in love with the house and bought it in 1987. He and his wife were married in the house, and he regularly indulges in one of his favorite forms of relaxation--raising roses and orchids in his rooftop greenhouse.

Toig is an active member of the Historic Landmark Society, helping to generate funds so that property with historical value can be preserved, rather than torn down. He's also an avid reader with a wide range of interests, from suspense books and economic biographies to books about architecture. He's loved the Chicago Symphony since 1977.