

# Clifford Char, MD

## Anesthesiology

*What attracted you to your specialty and to St. Joseph Hospital (SJO)?*

Before medicine I was a chemical engineer, working for Eastman Kodak. I was tired of the corporate culture, wanted a career where I was improving people's lives, and liked the physiology of anesthesiology.

I'm originally from Hawaii. I'm still on staff at Queens Hospital in Oahu, Hawaii, and a few weeks out of the year I practice there. It's similar in size to St. Joseph Hospital (SJO), but without pediatrics. I practiced there for a year before my wife and I decided to live and raise our kids (ages 14 and 17) in Southern California.

I chose to work at SJO because of its reputation, and I've been very happy here. Allied Anesthesia Medical Group has 42 pediatric and adult anesthesiologists, and we have a very strict hiring policy. When I started here I thought the policy was so extreme, but I've come to realize it does help us choose great associates. In a day's work we might go from a hernia repair to a very sick pediatric patient to a heart bypass. The quality and versatility of anesthesiologists here is by



far the best I've seen. We are looking to hire but it's not easy. Rather than hire someone who isn't excellent, we'd rather work more hours. Any of us could work only a regular schedule in an outpatient surgery center, but we enjoy the challenges of providing good care in a tertiary hospital as well. It's why I went into medicine.

*Any truth to the rumor that healthcare reform may result in a 50% cut in anesthesiology rates?* We're very concerned that could happen. Already, anesthesiology reimbursement from Medicare is about 30% of what is billed. If that is cut in half, we're going to see a lot of anesthesiologists leaving the profession, or not accepting insurance. We need to achieve parity.

*What trends are you seeing in anesthesiology?* The rise in obesity in children and adults is very concerning. We're seeing more patients with sleep apnea, diabetes and hypertension, which increase the level of complexity in anesthesia and post-op care. There is also a trend for shorter acting anesthesia. With more minimally invasive procedures, a lot of other people feel they can provide anesthesia care

for in-office or bedside procedures. Propofol is a great anesthetic, but it can cause apnea, and it's important to be ready to provide general anesthesia. Our group is working with the MEC and hospital to ensure we maintain quality standards, with proper airway protocols and close monitoring.

*Where are you found away from the hospital?* Since November I've been on medical missions to the Philippines, India, Ethiopia and Guatemala, and I'm figuring out where to go next year. I like providing much-needed care without legal barriers and patients are very appreciative. I also enjoy spending time with my family, camping, surfing, running and playing tennis. And, I'm an elder at Journey Evangelical Church in Westminster, which is very gratifying and challenging.

*Dr. Char received his bachelor's degree at Tufts University in Boston, MA, and medical degree at the University of Hawaii. He went to Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Massachusetts General Hospital and Children's Hospital Boston for residency and pediatric/cardiac fellowship training. He has been on staff at SJO for 10 years.*



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A PUBLICATION FROM THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AND CHIEF OF STAFF

St. Joseph Hospital   
ST. JOSEPH  
HEALTH SYSTEM

1100 W. Stewart Dr.  
Orange, CA 92868

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