Nadia Elihu, MD
Internal Medicine

How did you end up as an Internist at Pulmonary Consultants and Primary Care Medical Group?

When I finished my residency I was applying to different places. I was at a dinner party seven years ago where I saw Dr. (William) Collins. He recommended practicing at St. Joseph Hospital and gave me the number for Human Resources. When I called HR they said there happened to be an opening in a group with the best doctors in Orange County. It was an opportunity that doesn’t often come along and I took it. I’m very proud to be a member of the group, to be able to refer to the best specialists in the county and to be affiliated with St. Joseph Hospital.

I always wanted to be a doctor. There is a level of intimacy and trust my patients have in me that I couldn’t have with any other profession. It’s humbling. I plan to practice medicine in this capacity for a very long time.

What is the focus of your practice?

I’m seeing a lot of patients who have high blood pressure, diabetes and glucose intolerance -- now more than ever since laboratories changed parameters a couple of years ago in order to catch things earlier. I spend a large part of my day reeducating patients about lifestyle modifications - diet, exercise - things you’d think people know. But when it comes from their doctor they see it in a different light and a great percentage make changes.

What other aspects of preventive medicine are you encouraged to see?

One thing is the new vaccine for cervical cancer and the possibilities raised with immunizations for other disease entities that are caused by viruses, such as shingles or pneumonia. When I talk to concerned parents about the vaccine I tell them it’s their job to worry about virtue and it’s my job to worry about their health.

Do you agree with the predictions that obesity will overtake smoking as a leading cause of death?

It’s certainly easier to help someone to quit smoking than to lose weight. Our entire culture promotes super sizing. I get chapped by the extensive advertising for stuff that is bad for you. I’ve had patients who when I tell them they have to change what they are eating they sob. There is still a lot about obesity we don’t know regarding perceptions of food and satiety.

What do you do to stay healthy?

I practice what I preach and do Pilates religiously. I’m addicted to it - and coffee. Not only does Pilates feel good but it makes sense from a medical perspective. It can help prevent injuries and strengthen the body for many conditions, such as low back or neck pain. I recently fell down steps in high heels and broke my wrist, but I’ve been able to adapt the exercises.

Dr. Elihu and her husband, Radiologist David Karlin, MD, have two children, ages 9 and 5. As a family they are involved in the kids’ karate, ballet, tennis and school activities.

Dr. Elihu graduated from Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, New York, and completed her residency at the West Los Angeles Veterans Hospital. She is board certified in Internal Medicine.

Dr. Elihu was born in Iran, left 28 years ago and grew up in the Los Angeles area. She hopes to visit Iran someday when she is sure she can return home.