

Hector Ho, MD Neurosurgeon

Before moving your practice to Orange in 2006 you were performing 400 spinal cases per year in the Midwest. How does that compare with your current practice?

My case load is currently about 50 percent intracranial and 50 percent spinal surgeries. Because of Cancer Services at St. Joseph Hospital we have the support here to perform complex procedures for intrinsic spinal tumors and metastatic diseases of the spine, along with degenerative cases.

The breadth and depth of the neurosurgical care at this hospital is incredible; we cover the full gamut of neurosurgery, including pediatric care. I suspect that some patients are still being sent to UCLA or Loma Linda for neurosurgical care, even though our capabilities are as advanced as any of those facilities and it's no longer necessary to send them elsewhere.

What's new in Neurosurgery at St. Joseph Hospital?

I'm very excited about our new Stroke Program. There is a definite need and with the availability of interventional radiology we are able to do treat complex cerebrovascular and intracranial vascular lesions. The Stroke Program is an important component of the growing neuroscience services at St. Joseph Hospital.

We're also working with Dr. (Lawrence) Wagman (Executive Medical Director, The Center for Cancer Prevention and Treatment) on launching a Brain Tumor Program later this year. The Cancer Center's Trilogy system will enable us to perform radiosurgery for the brain and spine.

How is Neurosurgery evolving?

Along with advanced understanding of biology and the neurological system, techniques are becoming more refined and less invasive, particularly with the advent of intraoperative navigation. Procedures are more precise and safer. Today we can take out a brain tumor and the patient will be discharged in one to two days, and radiosurgery can be offered as an outpatient procedure. That was unheard of 10 years ago, when the patient

was hospitalized for three to four weeks. Although the most devastating forms of brain tumors still shorten life significantly, advanced techniques enable these patients to lead a better quality of life and have less "downtime" from surgical procedures.

We're furthering cutting edge research. For example, working in the Brain Stem Research Lab at CHOC, William Loudon, M.D., Shengwen "Calvin" Li, Ph.D., and I recently coauthored and submitted an article for publication in the *Journal of Neurosurgery* on diverse biomarker expression in the glioblastoma multiforme patient.

What are your pastimes outside of work?

I don't have a lot of time outside of work, although I do enjoy traveling to new places (I went to China a few years ago) and hiking in the local canyons such as Crystal Cove. As a Christmas gift I received sailing lessons, and I'm looking forward to taking them, possibly this summer. Our kids are out of college and live in Chicago and we like to visit them frequently.

