“It’s amazing how one day someone walks into your life, and you cannot remember how you ever lived without them.”

— Unknown

Marital Status
Dear colleagues,

Our November newsletter will reflect on how our marital status and family situation enriches and impacts our work. Our Department consists of members who are single, living together, married, with or without children, close to or far from other family members, divorced or widowed. Every one of these situations profoundly affect our work and our life.

Family members share joys and sorrows with each other. We celebrate successes and take care of each other when someone is sick or in need. The desire to belong to a community is wired into our DNA. Within this community, at home and at work, some people are deeply connected by a phenomenon, which we call “chemistry” or “connected souls”. It is the most powerful force of human beings, stronger than the desire for money or fame and stronger than the decay or renewal of the human body. It can occur between two lovers, a parent and a child or two good friends. Connected souls can communicate without speaking, know without telling and provide comfort without the need for explanations.

As the holidays are approaching, we want to express our gratitude for these precious people who make our life better. Please take a few minutes to be thankful, to be in the moment, and to appreciate that someone – at work and at home. Do not wait to burn the candles, use the pretty tablecloth and open that special bottle of wine. Know that however good or bad the situation was today, it will change. And if today wasn’t as good as you had hoped for, remember that most of us got a second chance: It is called tomorrow.

Heike E. Daldrup-Link
Associate Chair for Diversity
Department of Radiology

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4RjJxszamQ
The sum of our experiences, good and bad, makes us who we are, and affects how we think and approach problem solving at this moment. Every individual has unique thought patterns and strengths. When groups of people with varying thought patterns and practices come together to solve problems, we become stronger and more able to achieve the innovative and creative process desired to drive medicine and health forward. In this case, creating a culture of diversity is less about a moral responsibility and more about the best way to build a highly productive and innovative research environment.

One group of people, however, get the short end of the stick when it comes to being looked at for their abilities to contribute to a diverse thinking environment: young parents, especially mothers. Maybe it's the too frequent jokes about “mommy brain,” or the fact that the bags under our eyes are a little larger, but in reality, as opposed to limiting or inhibiting our ability to contribute innovating thinking, becoming a parent can actually strengthen several of the skills that contribute to, and manage, diversity of thought. Parents of young children are forced to have excellent time management skills making them highly focused on the task at hand. They become more emotionally intelligent, better able to read group dynamics and interpersonal relationships. Becoming a parent can tighten the drive and motivation behind pursuing research as we're forced to evaluate our priorities in life, and can even make us more ambitious as we strive to become role models and provide for our children. We actually become more courageous. Biologically, the increasing oxytocin levels in our systems, both moms and dads, decrease activity in the brain from fear stimuli, perhaps leaving us more able to express our thoughts and opinions. Perhaps it's time to stop only tolerating the presence of young parents in our work environments, overlooking our new experience and abilities. Instead, view us as what we are: finely tuned and highly optimized individuals ready and motivated to innovate and excel in group dynamics, not in spite of, but because of, our role as parent.

The academic leaky pipeline, or the slow trickle of women out of academics with the progression of career level, becomes more of a deluge when female academics hit the child rearing years, coincidentally just around postdoc or junior faculty levels. This is a lose-lose situation. Institutions end up lacking diversity of thought and women miss out on good jobs. Many ideas have been proposed to help this problem at the institutional level, but we all know these large, system level advancements take time. Perhaps, an immediate thing each of us can all do is reassess how we view, and therefore treat, new parents in the academic research environment. We should highlight what skills and advantages they bring rather than operate from a deficit perspective centered on the perceived loss of continuous availability and, in essence, make sure our ideas pivot from the archaic stereotypes. Now that would be a diverse thought.

Katie Wilson, PhD
Instructor of Radiology
Stanford Medicine | Radiology
I had the privilege of joining the Department of Radiology as an Assistant Professor in November 2015. I am married to a wonderful man named Alex and we have a lovely baby girl, Elena. I wanted to share my story with you as this Newsletter is dedicated to marital status and how it enriches our work.

My story began in 2011 when I met my husband, Alex, in Los Angeles while doing a postdoctoral fellowship at UCLA. Alex is an automotive designer and in early 2013 he got an outstanding career opportunity at Chrysler which required him to move to Michigan. While I stayed back in Los Angeles to complete my postdoctoral fellowship, Alex flew from Detroit to Los Angeles three times a month for over two years. In late 2014, he started looking for a new career opportunity and I began my faculty position search, hoping that Alex and I would finally get to live together. A week after Alex got an offer from Volkswagen in Santa Monica, I got an offer from Dr. Gambhir to join the Department of Radiology. I still remember calling Alex that day, telling him the great news with little sadness in my voice as it meant being apart once again. He congratulated me and said “This is a fantastic opportunity and you will do great. This is your dream and you should go after it. Regarding us, we will be in the same State—we are getting closer and closer....and the flights are getting shorter and shorter....it will all work out and will be great, you will see”. His response was so positive and inspiring that gave me great confidence and excitement about my move to Stanford. I even started thinking about the projects and proposals I would like to write for my lab that very same day. Soon after, Alex moved to Santa Monica, we got married and a month later I moved to Stanford. I had already prepared myself for at least a few years of long-distance marriage or as my husband liked to say, “short distance—at the end we were in the same State”. A few months after joining Stanford, Volkswagen decided to relocate their studio from Santa Monica to Belmont. What were the odds? Never in a million years did we think that would happen for us. I like to think of it as fate.

We now have a lovely daughter, Elena, and she means the world to us. In addition to my husband, I have tremendous support from my mother, Elena, who moved to the US to help us care for our baby girl. Having our family recognize and support the passion for our work is extremely valuable and I truly believe it enriches everything we do in science or any kind of work. I am never worried when I need to work late or over holidays as I know that I have the support of my whole family. This piece of mind helps us focus, be efficient and move forward. Additionally, having an artist right beside me in science definitely helps me get our work featured on a cover of a journal. I do consider myself extremely lucky having the opportunity to be here and be surrounded and supported by all of you and my family!

Tanya Stoyanova, PhD
Assistant Professor
Stanford Medicine | Radiology
As the son of a Urologist, it was often assumed that I would also become a surgeon. When I finished medical school, I was confronted with the many possibilities available in medicine. This prompted questions that I was not ready to answer, such as what kind of lifestyle did I aspire to have? What were my priorities? What specialty could sustain my interest throughout a lifetime career? As a young doctor, I assumed it was possible to find a field which encompassed all of these priorities.

After much self-reflection, I discovered that surgery would not be a good fit for me, yet Nuclear Medicine was a perfect blend of all of my interests. It also allowed me to pursue a potential research and clinical future. Without the stress of overnight work or emergencies in the hospital, Nuclear Medicine gave me the opportunity to pursue medicine and spend time with my then two young children. We added another child and many other priorities to our list. I finished my training while my wife worked as a pediatrician, and once I became an attending, she decided to work part time.

When our middle son had a near fatal car accident, I was daunted by the fragility and finite nature of our life and made it my priority to ensure my career path was aligned with my initial career goals while constantly maximizing time with my family and attempting to be present during that time. At work, I became more involved in imaging informatics research, a passion left on hold during the time of clinical training and my initial years as an attending. At home, I made it a point to bike my children to school every morning to spend more quality, uninterrupted time with them. After dropping them at school, I bike to work which allows me to be physically active and adjust my mindset for the workday ahead.

Those precious moments between home life and work life have become extremely important to me as well- they provide the opportunity to cultivate activities (in my case biking, sailing, meditating) for myself that will further fuel and enrich my work and family life. These are only possible by having developed an intricate support system between my spouse and I, where we give value to family time, couple time and alone time. These are essential to maintaining some sort of work-life balance. We are fortunate to live in the warmth and beauty of the Bay Area which offers us a lifestyle that supports these values.

Guido A Davidzon, MD, SM
Clinical Assistant Professor
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I was asked to write my thoughts on marital status... as a single parent, a pediatric radiologist and as an accomplished rock climber. It was very nice to be seen this way because, most of the time, I felt my life and career were just a tentative way to keep my head out of the water. I went through a painful divorce eight years ago and since then have been raising my children alone. Well, not quite alone, I had support from other radiologists, covering for me in times I had to go to court for my divorce, when I had to pick up my sick children at school, meet the teachers or go watch my kids in a school show. My parents have been also absolutely wonderful, flying from Europe to help me at home when I had to go to meetings or when I was totally exhausted.

My days start way before I go to work, and end late at night, when dinner is cooked, children are in bed, laundry is done and lectures or papers ready. Although alone, I wanted to fulfill all my role as a mother and I didn't have a nanny. I cook dinner every night, do all the laundry, and used to tell stories at night when my kids were little. Now that they are teenagers, I am trying to morally support them. I never planned to have a big career but I really enjoy my work. I like to take care of patients, I like to teach and I always loved to do research. Being a single parent, I have learned that I need to do things not only well, but also fast if I want to be successful. I have also learned to prioritize, whether it is to talk to a family of a sick child, dictate and sign my reports, find the time to fill up the fridge, or pick up my kids on the street when they fall from a bike. I have learned to improvise as well. I remember taking my four and six-year-old in the middle of the night to the hospital to reduce an intussusception, asking the parents of the sick child to keep an eye on my own children. Being a mother and single parent definitely made me more sensitive and companionate to the stress and worries of other parents and their children. I also believe it is important to do different things additionally to my work. For me it's also important to travel, to be interested in art and literature, to discover other cultures, to keep my mind open and to keep my daily work in perspective.

Erika Rubesova, MD
Clinical Associate Professor
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Above: Spring 2018, with my children in Patagonia, Argentina. I feel lucky that they share with me the love for travel, adventures and the mountains.

At left: My son at the age of 11. Both of my children helped me to enrich my collection of teaching cases of buckle fractures.
It is very difficult to properly describe the pain and grief we have been through since January 8, 2018. That day we woke up like any regular Monday morning, unaware that life, as we knew it, would be over just a few hours later. Within a split second our lives changed from hectic, but extremely happy and pretty much picture perfect to complete shatters. Not a single day goes by without me catching myself wishing it was all just a nightmare, that I can wake up from it and all is back to normal again. The children often speak about wishing for a time machine to revert the tragic events. We just miss him so very much.

The implications of Juergen’s death are quite frankly suffocating. As if it were not already enough to lose the love of your life or your great father, respectively, we were drowned in an avalanche of problems, ranging from financial aspects, the house, career implications, emotional harm, truly existential problems overall. Whenever I feel that we manage somewhat, a new issue arises. I always had the deepest sympathy and respect for single mothers, but that was from the safe distance of being in a stable relationship where both partners pulled their weight. While I certainly had Juergen’s back so he could advance his career in record time, he truly cared and was deeply involved in all things related to our family. Family was one of his top priorities. I cannot possibly fill that void. Consequently, the children have been very traumatized. Juliana, only five years old at the time, still deeply affected, is making some progress. But her older brother Alex suffers deeply. He had such a strong bond to his father and vice versa. While he slowly starts talking about dad, he is often still in denial and tells himself that dad is in China for his research and will come back some day or some other halfway plausible scenario.

I do not know what would have happened to us without the great support that we received in the months following Juergen’s death. Sam and Aruna who were pitching in from the very first hour after the accident, so many of my colleagues, friends and neighbors helping out with dinners or offering play dates and welcome distraction for the children, lending an ear and some perspective, my colleagues in the musculoskeletal imaging division who are so supportive and understanding, and our nanny, Elke, really more a family member, who is so committed and one of the most important constants in our lives. We are deeply grateful for the enormous compassion and generosity.

Now, more than 9 months out, life is unfortunately still a daily struggle. We have found some new routines, but nothing really feels normal yet. I should be completely focused on my career, which is very challenging in the current situation.

There are definitely days where I feel that I can tackle this, but also still so many days where I am just completely paralyzed and grief struck. I refuse to be a victim of our circumstances, but can only hope that I will grow with my challenges. We have a long way to go, it will take time, and we will need a lot of help along the way. To me that is actually one of the most difficult aspects: asking for help.

Amelie Lutz, MD
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Stanford Medicine | Radiology
Family Resources at Stanford

A comprehensive list of BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS FOR FACULTY WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES can be found here:


http://med.stanford.edu/academicaffairs/professoriate/FacultyResources/worklife/family.html

Staff resources

Whether you are expecting your very first child or seeking child care for your fourth, Stanford provides resources to help you manage all aspects of children and family life. Our goal is to partner with you as you navigate this exciting and busy season in life.

https://cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/benefits-rewards/worklife/children-family
The Radiology Department hosted its first diversity fair in October, featuring food and cultural traditions from 6 different continents (North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Australia and Asia – we did not yet find representatives yet from Antarctica) along with a world map, where attendants could mark their home town. The event was kicked off by a Grand Rounds lecture by Dr. Hannah Valantine, Chief Officer of Workforce Diversity, NIH on NIH’s scientific approach to achieving inclusive excellence. At the event, representatives from the Office for Faculty Diversity & Development at Stanford Medicine and the Provost Office provided information about diversity resources at Stanford. More than 200 people from the Department of Radiology and many other Departments attended the event.
Diversity is critical for our ability to serve patients in a multicultural environment, to provide inspiring role models for our trainees, to unfold discoveries at the interface of different disciplines, to address challenges in our health care system and to cure humanity— one patient at a time.

Representation from 6 continents and ~42 countries.