Orthopedic Surgeon and Renaissance Man

Robert Murphy, MD

By: Cyndy Museatel

Robert Murphy, MD

Robert Murphy, MD, Chairman of Desert Orthopedic Center, is a Renaissance man. Not only is he a well-respected orthopedic surgeon, but he also has a master's degree in Management of Healthcare Services. But he is more than just a professional. He's close to his family, and enjoys sports, being in the beauty of nature, and reading philosophy.

"Orthopedics is a broad field of medicine. Because of the rapid expansion of knowledge and technology, it's no longer possible for a single surgeon to be competent in all of these areas. So, there is a shift from the solo practitioner to a subspecialty group model like Desert Orthopedic Center," explains Murphy.

A group needs a large facility and support staff, requiring physicians to have business and management skills. That is why Murphy, who went to Medical School at the University of Kansas and did his internship at San Diego's Mercy Hospital, obtained the master's degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Public Health. "I help our group deal with business issues," he says.

Murphy is passionate about his work. He finds it rewarding when patients tell him about a dramatic improvement in the quality of their lives because of something he did. One of the problems he sees in today's medicine is that the decreasing reimbursement for services and increasing cost of providing services has put severe financial pressure on medical groups nationwide. Murphy, who worries about how everyone in the future will receive necessary health care, has been appointed to a national advisory board that consists of United States Senators and Representatives, Chief Executive Officers of industry and hospitals, and physicians. "We will recommend improvements in the United States health care system," he says.

Murphy moved to the desert in 1976. After completing his residency at the University of California, San Diego, he held a full-time faculty position there. "I came to Eisenhower Medical Center because I wanted to be in clinical practice," he explains. It has been a positive thirty-year association, which is growing. "The Eisenhower Joint Replacement Center will improve the quality of care, consistency of care, efficiency of care and cost of care," says Murphy. "I think it's a model of how doctors and the hospital will relate in the future."

He and his wife, Linda A. Murphy, a nursing instructor at College of the Desert, have five children: David, Stacey, Leslie, Ashley, and Melanie, who is a senior at Palm Desert High School, and two grandchildren. "I met Linda when she came to Eisenhower Medical Center as an orthopedic nurse in 1977. She's still my very best friend," Murphy says.

A true sportsman, over the years Dr. Murphy has enjoyed jogging, biking, hiking, tennis, and golf. "Lately, I've become more interested in nature activities such as fly fishing, and most recently bird hunting with my fieldtrained Labrador retriever, Mollie. Observing the complexity of nature makes me realize the relative unimportance of what I do in the big scheme of things. I find that peaceful," he says.

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