

Murthy V. S. Andavolu, MD

CANCER CARE IS HIS PASSION

By: Roxanne Jones photos by Maile Klein



Dr. Murthy V. S. Andavolu and Dr. Radhika Gade-Andavolu and their daughter, Sarika.

This is my passion," says Murthy V. S. Andavolu, MD, a Board Certified Medical Oncologist in solo practice in Rancho Mirage, referring to cancer care. "Cancer is something that cannot always be completely cured, but the patient can be cared for. And there are so many issues involved in cancer care. It's not just science and technology; there also are psychological, emotional and philosophical issues. It's a unique combination of art and science, and that's what attracts me to this field." Dr. Andavolu attended medical school at Osmania University in his native India. He completed his residency at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York, and a fellowship in oncology/hematology at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where he still teaches.

He notes that oncology is the fastest growing medical field, thanks to innovations in research, particularly genetic research, which is not only one of his main interests, but also his wife's profession (please see sidebar). "Our professions are a good complement, " and take up a major portion of our time." In addition to his busy clinical practice, Dr. Andavolu's office serves as a study site for clinical trials. He is particularly interested in lung and breast cancers.

When Dr. Andavolu isn't working, his eight-year-old daughter is the "most favorite, important and exciting thing in my life," he says proudly. "We want to make sure she matures into a thoughtful and astute person, that she understands how to think and analyze. I've always enjoyed teaching; I want her to have creative ways of thinking and learning."



Dr. Andavolu is also a well-trained pilot and enjoys flying single-engine planes, which he finds time to do about once a week, and he also likes to write. "I was a freelance journalist in college," he says. "I was a film critic, and also wrote about social issues. But these days, I write more prescriptions than anything else!" quips Andavolu. "And I haven't watched a movie in years; I figure I can always watch them when I'm 70." In the meantime, his patients and his family come first.

Science Is All in the Family: Radhika Gade-Andavolu, PhD You don't see patients in this Dr. Andavolu's office. But the potential impact of her work on patient care is remarkable. Dr. Radhika Andavolu, a molecular biologist at the Genetic Research Institute of the Desert (GRID) in the Eisenhower Lucy Curci Cancer Center, undertakes research that could not only reveal an individual's risk of developing cancer and other diseases, but also aid in development of preventive and therapeutic strategies tailored to that person's unique genetic makeup. "We recently found five genes associated with non-familial breast cancer, which accounts for more than 95 percent of breast cancer cases," she says. She is also the lead author in a study recently published in "Genetics in Medicine" in which a gene associated with early death in multiple sclerosis was identified. Dr. Andavolu's interest in genetic research was piqued in her native India where, until about a generation ago, marriage between cousins was permitted. She earned her PhD in India, and did her post-doctoral work at the City of Hope in Duarte, California, where she became a resident scientist before coming to the desert. Her penchant for developing her skills has only increased after coming to the desert, resulting in her obtaining a Master's degree in Business Administration, which also helped her in directing the management of GRID. Her early focus was on neuropsychiatric genetics, but after marrying her husband eight years ago, her work has evolved to oncology. "Our work goes hand-in-hand," she says.