

Proceedings in Obstetrics and Gynecology's Top Docs

Kelly K. Ward, MD



Clinical Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of General Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Medical Director, Labor and Delivery Unit and Mother-Baby Care, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Associate Residency Director, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

If you had not chosen medicine as a career, what field might you have gone into instead? Why?

This is a hard question as I knew by the age of seven that I wanted to be a doctor. I loved dissecting all things I could find outside while digging in the dirt or playing at the lake cabin. We had a small garden which spurred my interest too. Planting seeds and harvesting the vegetables was like a regular science experiment. If I had not chosen medicine, I may have owned a horse, chickens, goats and farmed a small acreage. Farm animals and crops are too time and labor intensive at this point in my life. While farming for me is unrealistic, I am going to try having a

Please cite this paper as: Kelly K. Ward, MD. Proc Obstet Gynecol. 2022; 11(2):Article 11 [4 p.]. Available from: <https://pubs.lib.uiowa.edu> Free full text article.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Unported License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

few beehives this year. I look forward to watching honey production in my backyard.

Why did you choose to specialize in Obstetrics and Gynecology?

Interestingly, I was debating general surgery versus obstetrics and gynecology until the last minute. I dual applied to both programs and began the interview process for both. Ultimately it was the continuity that I received from the obstetrics rotations that drove my passion in the field. Getting to know patients and their families and seeing them back for subsequent visits was the key to my choice. I do really love my time in the operating room and found that with OBGYN I could have the best of both worlds.

Who in Obstetrics and Gynecology do you find most inspirational? Why?

At this point in my career the most inspirational in obstetrics and gynecology are the residents. They have a passion and energy that keep me current, well read and excited to come to work every day. They find so much joy in the small things which remind me why I went into the medical field to begin with. I am grateful for their encouragement and support. They are impactful beyond words!

What have you enjoyed most about your clinical experiences? Why?

Relationships with patients and their families have been the most enjoyable part of my job. I have been with many

patients for 20+ years. Watching them grow their families, helping through challenging times and walking through medical decision making have been key to my enjoyment and passion. Having the opportunity to participate in such vulnerable moments in a family's story has been incredibly impactful.

Why did you choose to work in an academic setting?

I choose academics for a variety of reasons, mainly the people. My colleagues, the residents and medical students were key players in my decision to stay in academic medicine. The constant lifelong learning that we do in an academic setting including Grand Rounds, conferences as well as working with young minds in the teaching role keep me on the forefront of medicine.

What is the best part of working in academics?

The young eager minds and constant quest for learning are the best. Watching the residents progress from their intern year to graduation bring me so much joy. They have an amazing work ethic and passion for constant learning.

If you could give one piece of advice to medical students considering entering your field, what would it be?

I would advise medical students to find their passion and follow that despite what they think they should like. If you love what you do, then going to work every day is not really work. Don't worry

about the hours or the pay, do what fills your cup and work will be so much fun.

If you could give one piece of advice to other practicing physicians in your field, what would it be?

Make choices that bring you joy. If you are not happy with your current situation, then make another choice. Life is too short – choose happy.

How do you balance work life and home life in your busy career?

I have lots of people who help both at work and at home. I have amazing colleagues who cover when I have last minute changes and I have an amazingly flexible husband and four children. They know sometimes that work comes first and sometimes work knows that my home life will come first. I have had to ask for help from many people over the years and I'm grateful as without them I would not be where I am today.

How would you summarize your personality using just three words?

Honest

Hard working

Humble

Which book (fiction or non-fiction) would you recommend for people in your field to read?

I recommend they read the Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks. She was an

African-American woman whose cells were taken without her knowledge and became one of the most important tools in medicine.

If you could make one change in the way medicine is practiced in your field, what would it be? Why?

Post-COVID I would make lots of changes as COVID has added another dimension to our field. But if I could make one change especially in obstetrics I would create more evidence-based guidelines for which we would guide management. So much of what we do in obstetrics has limited evidence to support our decision-making management. Studies are challenging to do involving pregnant patients. We are very evidence driven and could use more evidence to help guide management.

If you could change one thing about the world we live in, what would it be? Why?

That's a hard question. I feel so fortunate to be able to do what we do. If I could change one thing, I would make the world a kinder place. There is no room for hate or discrimination or fighting. I really do believe that most people are good and would love to see more joy in the world.

Who is the person in your life you would most like to thank?

This is a very challenging question as it has taken a village. I would first and foremost like to thank my husband who

helped me survive residency, a challenging job and 4 children. He was instrumental in me finishing residency as there were many days I wanted to quit. He made sure the kids could visit when I was on call especially when they were little. He frequently reminded me that I could be a good mom and provider. I also owe my parents a big thank you for believing in and encouraging me to pursue my dreams and passions. They supported all of my crazy dreams and ideas. And finally I owe my 4 children a huge thanks as I have missed many things throughout their years as I was working. My kids are all well-adjusted and well balanced. I think it was good for them to learn that

the world doesn't just revolve around them. When I tell them I will be at something I really try to make that happen. My daughter is hoping to graduate from college in a couple of years and follow her heart and passion with a career in medicine and specifically OB/GYN. She knows that I'm tired much of the time, but she knows that what I do makes me very happy. I'm so grateful for the support of my family and the institution for taking a chance on me as I really have gotten to live my dream working at the University of Iowa. I had never been to the University of Iowa until I came for residency and now, we call Iowa home.