

ROLE MODEL

Geeta Kumar

The consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist talks to **Kathy Oxtoby** about how her family inspires her practice, and why she is driven to empower her patients



NOMINATED BY SUJATHA KUMARI

"I have known Geeta Kumar since 2008, both personally and as a trainee doctor.

"As a clinician, I like her systematic approach and individualised management plan for clinical problems. She has clear, empathetic communication skills.

"Mrs Kumar has good leadership qualities, both the ability and willingness to resolve any problems."

Sujatha Kumari is a specialty trainee year 6, obstetrics and gynaecology, Wrexham Maelor Hospital, Wales

NOMINATE A ROLE MODEL

To nominate someone who has been a role model during your medical career, send their name, job title, and the reason for your nomination to awaters@bmj.com

Family is everything to Geeta Kumar. Not only are her loved ones a source of support, they are her inspiration.

"I admire the altruism of my father—he was absolutely selfless; the determination of my mother; and the sense of humour and optimism of my husband," she says.

Empathy and compassion are the qualities she admires in her daughter, a junior doctor. As a child, her daughter taught her an important lesson she's never forgotten. "She told me: 'Mum, it's important to care about people, rather than just caring for them.' Which is absolutely the right way to think about what we do in healthcare," says Kumar.

These values informed her choice to pursue a career in obstetrics and gynaecology. "For me, the specialty is about the wellbeing of women, both physically and mentally. The impact of menstrual disorders or menopause can affect women's mental health. Often these women lack support, so it gives me a sense of satisfaction to be able to help," she says.

Kumar has worked as a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Wrexham Maelor Hospital in north Wales since 2006. It was here that she completed one of the achievements of which she is most proud: developing a shared decision making aid for women with heavy menstrual bleeding, endorsed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. "Helping women to make informed decisions with their clinician's support is what I'm passionate about and what I encourage my trainees and colleagues to do," she says.

Born and raised in India, Kumar always wanted to become a doctor and was the first in her family to do so, training at Gandhi Medical College in Bhopal. "I owe a lot to my dad, especially. He had huge faith in me and encouraged me to chase my dreams. I remember his look of immense pride the day I got into medical school," she says.

The specialty is about the wellbeing of women, both physically and mentally

Her father didn't live to see her graduate and, as the eldest daughter, she faced extra family pressures. "As a family, our love and support for each other got us through. That's why, when I talk to junior doctors about overcoming work challenges, I always advise them about the importance of having a good support network," says Kumar.

Kumar moved to the UK in 1995 and worked as a consultant in Wigan, Greater Manchester, before moving to Wrexham Maelor Hospital, where she and her husband are now consultants in the same department.

Kumar loves passing on her skills and experience to the next generation and is a certified coach and mentor. "If I hadn't been a doctor, I'd have been a teacher," she says. She has just registered as a volunteer for the British Red Cross, providing adult education to communities in Wrexham.

As clinical director for the past eight years, Kumar has led significant service expansion, and she has also taken on the role of medical director for quality and safety at her hospital. Nationally, she has worked with NICE, developing clinical guidelines and quality standards; is the vice chair of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' Patient Safety committee; serves on the college council; and has just been appointed national lead for gynaecology planned care in Wales.

Outside work she loves Bollywood dancing, learning languages, and, since the pandemic, long hikes.

But Kumar's family are her "pillar of strength," and she remains "extremely grateful to her parents" for what she has achieved and for the values they taught her.

Kathy Oxtoby, London

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