

Alumni Spotlight

Matthew Blitz, MD, MBA is a fellow in the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine and a clinical instructor for the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell in New York. He has over ten years of health care experience and has received countless awards and recognition for his contributions, teaching and service to the community. He earned his medical degree from the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California as well as a Master of Business Administration from the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California. Dr. Blitz completed his residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Hofstra North Shore-LIJ School of Medicine. He is expecting to complete his fellowship in 2019.



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Dr. Blitz is also an alum of the Health Scholar program (then known as the Clinical Care Extender program). He joined the program at Citrus Valley Health Partners and rotated through several departments. Read on to learn how the Health Scholar program has shaped the path and journey Dr. Blitz has taken in developing his own career!

Describe your history with health care.

I had a non-traditional path to medicine. After graduating from film school at the University of Southern California and pursuing an interest in computer programming and web development, I finally considered a career in medicine for the first time. I enrolled at California State University, Los Angeles, and completed a Bachelor of Science in Biology. During this time, I participated in the Clinical Care Extender (CCE) program (now known as the Health Scholar program) at Citrus Valley Health Partners in West Covina, California (2005-2006) and served on the leadership team as Director of Administration. I then returned to the University of Southern California to complete a 5-year MD/MBA dual-degree program at the Keck School of Medicine and the Marshall School of Business. From 2006-2008, while in medical school, I worked for COPE Health Solutions as Associate Director of Clinical Training. In this role, I helped recruit and manage a staff of medical, nursing and allied health students who gave lectures to individuals in the CCE (Health Scholar) programs and was responsible for ongoing development of the training curriculum. My residency and fellowship training have been at the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell in New York.

As an alumni, how do you feel your participation in one of our COPE Health Scholars programs has shaped or enhanced your growth and development in health care?

My interest in the leadership and management aspects of health care and my decision to pursue an MBA resulted from my work with COPE Health Solutions and the Clinical Care Extender (Health Scholar) Program. I was passionate about this work because it provided an opportunity to influence and to motivate thousands of young adults to become future health care professionals. I also learned directly about concepts such as process improvement, organizational design, and quality management.

What do you like most about your career in health care and what were the departments you rotated through?

I am very fortunate and privileged to have a career that is fulfilling on many levels. It is intellectually stimulating, ethically challenging, spiritually rewarding and unpredictable. I get to meet people from different backgrounds and life circumstances and use the specialized knowledge and experience that I've acquired over many years of training to improve or preserve their health.

As a CCE (Health Scholar), I rotated through a wide variety of departments, including labor

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and delivery, the neonatal intensive care unit, the emergency department and medical/surgical floors. I realized that every member of the care team has an opportunity to positively impact the patient experience. Advanced training and specialized knowledge, although essential for medical decision-making and treatment, are not always necessary to play an important role.

What influenced you to have a career in health care?

My father is a doctor (OB/GYN) and, as I was growing up, it was the furthest thing from my mind as a career choice—he worked long and irregular hours, frequently stayed overnight on call at the hospital, and seemed absent from many parts of my childhood. I appreciated the importance of his work but the demanding nature of it made me quickly dismiss the possibility of following in his footsteps. My parents never encouraged me to go into medicine or any other specific career. I'm grateful for that because it forced me to sort out my own feelings about what I value and deem important. By approaching medicine as an adult, I had a much better understanding of my motivations, free of childhood misconceptions. I was eventually attracted to the dynamic nature of the field, the fact that it's constantly changing and evolving, necessitating a lifetime of learning in which physicians frequently get to use new technologies and treatments. The CCE (Health Scholar) program further solidified my interest and was my first genuine patient care experience.

What are your views on mentoring future health care leaders?

Strong mentor-mentee relationships are critical to success in health care. Not everything can be learned in a classroom, in a book, on the internet, or even by your direct experience. A good mentor should use their knowledge and experience to guide, motivate and inspire their mentee. Both parties ultimately benefit by finding new opportunities for personal and professional growth.

What is one piece of advice you would give to students looking to build a career in health care?

Do not get discouraged by the training process. Do not be deterred by rejection, failure and setbacks. Be simultaneously confident and humble throughout your professional career. Be aware of what you know and what you do not know, and never be afraid to ask for help or advice. Be respectful of others at all levels of training and practice. Listen to and learn from everyone.

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COPE Health Scholars is proud to provide educational experiences that develop future health care professionals into strong patient advocates and build trusting relationships between individuals and their local providers.

For more information, please contact
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