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## DHC Interviews Dr. Pat Murphy

Dr. Patrick Murphy is an accomplished geriatrician and family medicine physician who served the city of Louisville for nearly four decades of practice. He's also the 2018 winner of the KMDA's Excellence in Geriatrics Award. We're happy to share his insights and wisdom from a brief interview Dr. Murphy recently participated in.

**DHC: Dr. Murphy, thank you so much for talking with us today. To start, could you tell us how many years you served as a geriatrician and family medicine physician?**

Dr. Murphy: I finished residency in 1981 and retired in March 2018.

**DHC: What drew you to your specialties of family medicine and geriatrics?**

Dr. Murphy: I started out in family practice where I did just about everything but deliver babies. I took care of patients all the way from newborns to old age. One day, I looked out in my waiting room and all I saw were elderly patients. It turns out that if you take care of one elderly patient, there's an elderly patient hospital hotline. Pretty soon, they all know about your work. I decided to go ahead and get my certification in geriatrics, and take care of that population full time.

**DHC: Could you describe your work taking care of nursing home patients?**

Dr. Murphy: When I joined UofL's geriatrics program, my clinical bent was working with patients in nursing homes and home care. Patients in nursing homes are usually the sickest of the sick. Often times, there is a perception of nursing homes as warehouses for older people, but I think physicians have done well to change that idea over the last 15 to 20 years. People like Dr. Muhammad Babar and Dr. Waqar Saleem know how to do nursing home medicine, and are very effective.

It's just a different type of work. As a physician, you're dealing with people who may have multiple infections, or some that need a significant amount of rehab. Also, geriatrics is like pediatrics in that you're taking care of families just as much as the patient sometimes.

**DHC: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing practicing geriatricians today?**

Dr. Murphy: The foremost problem is financial. Geriatricians don't get paid like cardiac surgeons or super specialists. To get people interested in this type of practice, geriatric care almost has to be a vision for them personally. The doctors are certainly not in it for the money.

In addition, medical students are coming out of school 150-200K in debt. They're not often going into a primary care type of practice when some specialties allow them to make twice as much money their first year out of school.

Another problem we've seen is nursing home reimbursement. As I mentioned, a lot of these patients are very sick. It takes a lot of nursing and physician care. Nursing homes

don't get reimbursed well. For them to make due with what they're getting paid is hard. Nursing homes must balance that with a very high rate of turnover, especially of Certified Nursing Assistants. Trying to get people into the nursing home to care for patients is difficult.

**DHC: In what ways has serving the patient gotten easier?**

Dr. Murphy: The introduction of midlevel practitioners including nurse practitioners and physician assistants into the facility has made nursing home care better. These professionals can be available to the patient more often than physicians and do a really good job. Their skills combined with that of the physician can do wonders for patient care.

**DHC: You retired in March of 2018. What do you do for fun?**

Dr. Murphy: For those unaware, if you're over 65, anyone can take up to 6 hours of credit at the University of Louisville free each semester. I'm taking an English History course now.

I also volunteer at Supplies Over Seas. This is an organization that takes unused hospital supplies which would likely be tossed out. They recycle the supplies and are able to send them to countries in need such as Ghana and Haiti.

I'm also a reader. I walk wherever I'm able, and I have 5 grandkids, so I stay pretty busy.

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