

Orthopaedics runs in the family

By Jennie McKee

Fathers, sons, and brothers share a love of orthopaedics

When **Leon Levine, MD**, was considering an area of medicine to specialize in during the 1940s, orthopaedic surgery was not at the top of his list.

"No one, including me, was really interested in orthopaedics," says Dr. Levine. "The only conditions the orthopaedic guys handled were things like flat feet, osteomyelitis, and scoliosis."

But the military changed his mind. "When I was in the service and was posted to Denver, there were too many general surgeons," he recalls. "So, I was given the choice of anesthesiology or orthopaedics. I chose orthopaedics and I still love it."

He passed his love of medicine to his son, **Alan M. Levine, MD**, who knew that he wanted to become a doctor when he was just five years old. Having a father who was an orthopaedic surgeon and a grandfather who was a dentist made him aware of the rewards of pursuing a career in medicine, even at that young age.

"Going into medicine was one of the few things that I actually considered," he says, adding that, as a child, he was influenced to become a physician by spending time in his grandfather's dental office.

Though he was focused on a career in medicine, the younger Dr. Levine didn't always know that he would follow his father's footsteps into orthopaedic surgery.

"Obviously, seeing that my father enjoyed what he did influenced me," he explains. "I wanted not to just follow him into medicine, but to have my own career, which is why orthopaedics was the last specialty that I considered."

The younger Dr. Levine has forged his own path as an orthopaedic surgeon, performing the dual role of orthopaedic oncologist and director of the Alvin & Lois Lapidus Cancer Institute at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore, Md. Dr. Levine finds his work extremely rewarding.

"In general, the sort of things that we do in orthopaedics, and especially in orthopaedic oncology, can make a huge difference in people's lives," he says. "I had a patient recently whom we treated for a spine tumor. His wife said to me, 'You gave me my husband back.'"

Both father and son are amazed at the advances in orthopaedic surgery that they have seen since they first started practicing.

"The specialty has developed dramatically and has blossomed since I got out of residency in 1980," says the younger Dr. Levine. "It's been fascinating to be part of that and to know all the things that we can do now that we didn't even conceive of doing when I got out of residency. A lot of the spine surgery, fracture care, and certainly all of the arthroscopy and total joint surgery are products of the last 30 years."

"It's nothing like it used to be," agrees his dad. "The only drugs we had in the 1950s were sulfa drugs. We had to sign for penicillin as though it were a narcotic." He still has samples of old-fashioned orthopaedic surgery devices such as a Colles fracture splint from the 1940s and a Charnley (hip) prosthesis.



Alan M. Levine, MD, and his father, Leon Levine, MD, review an article in the Annual Meeting daily edition of AAOS Now in San Diego.

A “family” practice in Nebraska

Patrick E. Clare, MD, and two of his sons, **Michael P. Clare, MD**, and **David J. Clare, MD**, all share a love of sports, an interest that drew them to orthopaedic surgery. The senior Clare played football while at the University of Nebraska and has been the team’s physician for 35 years.

“I had a good relationship with the orthopaedic surgeons who operated on me when I injured my knee ligament while playing football,” says Dr. Clare of his early influences to become an orthopaedic surgeon. “Although I had been considering family practice when I went to medical school, the rotation I did in orthopaedics as a senior medical student made me interested in this specialty.”

Dr. Clare points to his sons’ interest in medicine and their excellent academic and athletic abilities as their main motivations to become orthopaedic surgeons. “I think my sons were always interested in medicine. They were diligent students and good athletes, including in college.”

Dr. Clare jokes, however, that he must not have properly explained the demands of the profession to his sons. “I kid people and say ‘Maybe they didn’t listen,’ because I missed a few games here and there when they were growing up,” he says.

Younger son Michael, who specializes in treating foot and ankle injuries, practices at the Florida Orthopaedic Institute in Tampa, Fla. His father’s satisfaction with his work and his own interest in sports drew him to orthopaedics.

“Being around my dad and seeing how much he enjoyed his work influenced me a fair amount,” he says. “The types of patients he saw in the office and the cases he had done that day were often a topic of conversation at the dinner table. I also became interested in the musculoskeletal system from being in year-round athletic training.”

Michael’s older brother David treats hip and knee ailments as well as sports-related injuries at the same practice as his father, Nebraska Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine, PC, in Lincoln, Neb. He credits his father’s example as an important motivation for him to go into orthopaedics.

“What I enjoy about orthopaedics is the ability to treat someone with a physical ailment and improve the patient’s quality of life, and that’s something that I observed my father doing,” he says.

Like his father, David also had a lot of exposure to orthopaedics from the surgeries he underwent for sports-related injuries. “I had four shoulder surgeries and a couple of knee injuries when I played football in high school and college,” he says.

According to him, there are many benefits to working with his father. “I see Dad more now that I’m working with him than I did when I was growing up,” he says with a chuckle. “He sacrificed a lot then because he was so busy. It was hard sometimes, but we saw that he was unselfish with his time and that he gave to his

patients and to the University of Nebraska. "

Dr. David Clare says that although he and his father have always had a good relationship, being at the same practice has given them even more of an opportunity to interact. "I see him every day, and we're just that much closer now that we're working together. We consult with each other about cases. It's a lot of fun; I wouldn't trade it," he says.

The senior Dr. Clare jokes that working with his son has one drawback. "It drives some family members up a wall if we start talking about orthopaedics, so they kid with us and urge us to take a 'time-out' and talk about something else," he says.

When asked if he would ever consider working at the same practice as his father and brother, Dr. Michael Clare says, "Never say never."



Patrick E. Clare, MD, and his sons Michael P. Clare, MD, (at left) and David J. Clare, MD, (at right) have dedicated their careers to orthopaedics.

Brothers in orthopaedics

Another pair of related orthopaedic surgeons also practices at Nebraska Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine, PC. Both **David P. Heiser, MD**, and his younger brother, **Thomas M. Heiser, MD**, knew that they wanted to be physicians at an early age.

"Tom and I come from a medical family," says the elder Dr. Heiser. "Our father was a general surgeon in a small town, where the general surgeon does just about everything. We got to see various types of surgery up close. I was able to observe surgeries when I was in high school and actually scrubbed in on surgeries with my father during my first year or two of medical school."

"When I played football for the University of Nebraska," says the younger Dr. Heiser in recalling the influences that drew him to orthopaedics, "I was around the team physician a fair amount, who was Dr. Pat Clare," he says of his current colleague. "I was hurt a lot; in fact, I felt like I had about every injury that you could have, although none of them required surgery."

The Drs. Heiser enjoy working together because of the opportunities they have to consult with each other on cases.

"It's always easy to reach one another if we want to talk about something," says the younger Dr. Heiser. "We've been doing it for so long that it's a natural thing."

"It's a good to work at the same practice as my brother," says the elder Dr. Heiser, adding that "there's no jealousy about who gets more referrals or anything like that. It's very congenial."

The Levines, Clares, and Heisers are just three of many families that have more than one orthopaedist.

For other examples of multigenerational orthopaedic families, as well as to learn about how related orthopaedists are participating in the Academy's 75th Anniversary Project, see sidebar above.

Learn about orthopaedic families—and tell us about yours

In 2000, the October *AAOS Bulletin* told the story of several orthopaedic families, including **Richard C. Wixson, MD**, and his son, **Richard L. Wixson, MD**; **Bess E. Brackett, MD**, and her father **E. Boone Brackett III, MD**; **William J. Robb III, MD**, and his father **W. John Robb II, MD**, whose father also was an orthopaedic surgeon; **Stacia Smith, MD**, and her father **Robert F. Smith, MD**; and **K. Robert Lang, MD**, and his daughter **Kaarstan Lang, MD**.

Academy leadership has its own orthopaedic families, including Past President **Reginald R. Cooper, MD** and his son **Douglas M. Cooper, MD**; Past President **J. Vernon Luck Sr., MD**, and his son **James V. Luck Jr., MD**—all of whom were featured in the *Bulletin* article, and current First Vice President **E. Anthony Rankin, MD**, and his son, **Marc E. Rankin, MD**.

Like the Robbs, the Imrie family has three generations of orthopaedists: **Donald T. Imrie, MD**, was an orthopaedic surgeon in Vicksburg and Jackson, Miss.; his son, **Stephen T. Imrie, MD**, is an orthopaedic surgeon practicing in San Jose, Calif.; and his granddaughter, **Meghan N. Imrie, MD**, is an orthopaedic resident at Stanford University.

The AAOS 75th Anniversary Project Team invites you to visit www.aaos.org/75years to learn more about orthopaedic families like these or to share information about your own orthopaedic family tree. Visit the *AAOS Bulletin* archives at www.aaos.org/now

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