

Euthym Kontaxis, MD - An Extraordinary Life



He laughs easily, smiles often and holds up a family photo while sharing stories about his wife Krisann and three boys. Describing himself as part of a typical immigrant Greek family, he exudes the basic principles of his life: church, family and medicine.

Euthym Kontaxis, MD, Medical Director, Emergency Department, Eisenhower Medical Center, is also quick to relay the inspirations in his life — a grandmother who lived to be 101 years old and his son Nicholas who has special needs. He talks about his extended Greek family, and his father, a biochemist, whose love of science became an inevitable connection to his own fascination with medicine.

A major in biochemistry and biophysics, Dr. Kontaxis attended medical school at Oregon Health Sciences University. “I spent my four years in medical school enjoying everything. I loved it all,” he said. Graduating valedictorian of his class, Dr. Kontaxis began his residency in obstetrics and gynecology. But after moonlighting in emergency departments, he knew he had found his calling. Dr. Kontaxis completed his residency at University of California, Los Angeles, where he helped develop pediatric protocols for an inner city emergency department at White Memorial Medical Center. Establishing himself in Phoenix, Arizona, Dr. Kontaxis was instrumental in starting a dedicated pediatric emergency department within the general emergency department at Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center in Phoenix.

Six years into a successful practice in Phoenix, Dr. Kontaxis took a slight detour in his medical career. After noticing the lack of deacons in his church, he and his wife packed up the boys and their belongings, and headed east to Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts. For three years, Dr. Kontaxis worked as an attending physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Mount Auburn Hospital while completing a Master of Divinity. “One thing we try to do in our group is to share new clinical aspects of conditions and treatments so we can all improve. That’s when medicine is at its best — when people work together and collaborate.”

One of the reasons Dr. Kontaxis and his family returned to the desert following Divinity school was the central location of the Coachella Valley for family gatherings, with family in Los Angeles and Phoenix. Discovering Eisenhower Medical Center was a serendipitous event. “Eisenhower has been great and very responsive to the needs of the Emergency Department. We determined a need for a stat lab and that was established. We needed a CT scanner and the Auxiliary responded. We have great imaging capabilities, and we’re on the cutting edge in terms of stroke and heart treatments,” explains Dr. Kontaxis. “I just returned from a medical advisory board meeting which included 40 directors, and they were amazed at how we deal with strokes in this hospital. We’re way ahead of the curve.”

On a monthly basis, Dr. Kontaxis and his colleagues meet to review topics. “One thing we try to do in our group is to share new clinical aspects of conditions and treatments so we can all improve. That’s when medicine is at its best — when people work together and collaborate,” relays Dr. Kontaxis. “The idea of a hospital is collaboration, and we strive for that here at Eisenhower. I am inspired by my colleagues on a daily basis.”

At the end of the day, however, it’s all about family for Dr. Kontaxis and his wife. His sons’ sporting and school activities fill his time, along with church activities, reading and the anticipated family reunions. In some ways, it’s a very simple life. Perhaps that is what makes it so extraordinary.