 Linda Brodsky Memorial Journal

**Raising the Bar: A Filipino American’s Vision for Women in Medicine**

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Work-life integration (WLI) blends the demanding roles of a physician with equally important responsibilities as partners, parents, and children. Dr. Brodsky’s mission to help women physicians “get the jobs they want, the pay they deserve, and not become prisoners of their careers” deeply resonates with me. Her vision underscores the importance of balancing professional success with personal fulfillment – a balance I strive to achieve as a first-generation doctor. For me, WLI means giving 110% to my career and personal life without sacrificing one for the other. Although this requires careful planning and resilience to overcome obstacles, I aim to follow in Dr. Brosky’s footsteps and never surrender when it comes to fighting for what I believe is right for women in healthcare.

I am proud to be a Filipino American born to parents who immigrated to the United States in search of a better future for me. My family is deeply rooted in Filipino values of care and commitment to loved ones, reflected in our weekly Sunday dinners, frequent calls or text messages, and spontaneous trips to celebrate births, graduations, and weddings – being there for family in all of life’s celebrations, and not just reuniting during funerals. My parents have always encouraged me to dream big, even when it meant being away from them. Their unwavering support has been a source of strength and motivation, teaching me that I can still honor these values while pursuing my goals.

Leaving my family to attend medical school 900 miles away from the only place I’ve called home was one of the hardest decisions I’ve ever made. As an only child, I played an active role in our household—cleaning, cooking, grocery shopping, and driving my 80-year-old grandfather to his doctor’s appointments. Moving away from them was bittersweet but necessary to pursue my dream of becoming a physician. This experience deepened my understanding of the sacrifices that come with professional responsibilities.

Achieving WLI is particularly challenging in medicine, where lifelong learning, rigorous hours, and the commitment to patient care are unrelenting demands. For women physicians, these are compounded by gender expectations, societal pressures, and family responsibilities. As a future physician, I anticipate navigating these dynamics by setting boundaries, effectively planning, and fostering resilience. What seems impossible today can transform into inspiration when achieved, and I intend to demonstrate that balance is attainable.

One of the biggest challenges I anticipate is balancing motherhood with the demands of a medical career. Residency and early career years are crucial for professional growth, yet they coincide with the time many start families. Having taken three gap years before medical school, this concern weighs heavily on my mind. I wonder how I will navigate pregnancy, maternity leave, and early motherhood while meeting the expectations of a physician. Although these are natural aspects of life, I fear being perceived by colleagues or program directors as less dedicated if I prioritize my family during these years.

Additionally, I worry about meeting the expectations of my future children. The desire to be present, supporting and celebrating each of their milestones, conflicts with the demanding nature of medicine, which may sometimes prevent me from attending every event, game, or recital. This can create feelings of inadequacy and fuel doubts about whether I am truly fulfilling my roles at home and work. Balancing these roles will require managing professional perceptions and family expectations.

To navigate these challenges, I plan to rely on meticulous planning, communication, and self-reflection. My approach involves using both digital and paper planners, tools I’ve found invaluable throughout my academic journey. Digital planners provide flexibility to manage changes in real-time, while physical planners help me visualize weekly goals and priorities. By intentionally blocking time for work, family, and self-care, I hope to strike a balance that allows me to thrive in both spheres. Establishing clear boundaries with colleagues and maintaining a transparent family calendar will also help manage expectations.

Seeking mentorship has been another cornerstone of my preparation. My involvement with AMWA has been pivotal in shaping my understanding of WLI. One of the first events I attended featured Dr. Jenny Han, who shared her inspiring journey as a critical care specialist, professor, mother of three, and hospital leader. Her story inspired me and reinforced my belief that women can succeed both professionally and personally. AMWA continues to provide mentorship and inspiration during this path to becoming a physician.

Practicing self-compassion will also be essential. I recognize there will be moments when I cannot be everywhere I want to be. In those times, it will be critical to remind myself that I am doing my best. Accepting that I may miss some family events or work obligations and giving myself grace will be critical to avoid burnout. WLI is not about achieving a perfect balance daily but rather adapting to the demands of each moment. I believe this mindset, coupled with resilience, will allow me to build a meaningful career and family life.

As I advance in my career, I am committed to advocating for policies that support WLI, particularly for women physicians and Filipino women in medicine. Flexible scheduling, equitable parental leave policies, and mentorship programs are essential to empowering us to thrive at home and at work. By promoting these initiatives, I hope to pave the way for future generations of women physicians.

Ultimately, my goal is to inspire others by demonstrating that it is possible to excel as a physician while remaining devoted to family. My experiences as a Filipino American and my deep connection to my family have shaped my understanding of resilience, dedication, and love. These values will continue to guide me as I navigate the complexities of medicine and life. I hope my journey will encourage others to pursue their dreams while staying true to their values and loved ones. Though the path ahead is challenging, I believe that with determination, adaptability, and the support of those around me, I can lead a life where both work and family flourish.