



LEARNING FROM PATIENTS, LEADING WITH HEART

ONE OF THE FIRST PATIENTS TO TEACH JANDEL ALLEN-DAVIS D '80, MED '84 A LESSON IN LEADERSHIP WAS A VERY SICK TWO-YEAR-OLD BOY. As she recounted on the *Y on Earth Community Podcast* with host Aaron William Perry, Allen-Davis was a fourth-year medical student doing a subinternship at Children's National Medical Center and the toddler was on a ventilator. All night long, Allen-Davis and a nurse worked together to stabilize this patient's pulmonary artery pressures, but the drugs they pushed had no effect. Finally, at 7:00 a.m., the nurse shifted the boy's head—and his pressures stabilized.

"I'll never forget that night, after trying so hard to help this patient, the solution was so simple," says Allen-Davis. "We tend to think we need to make big changes in challenging situations, but often it's the simple ones that work."

Lessons learned as a physician have always informed Allen-Davis's career as a leader. Since 2018, Allen-Davis has been president and CEO of Craig Hospital, a 193-bed rehabilitation facility that specializes in the neuro-rehabilitation and research of patients with spinal cord and brain injury. Before joining Craig, she was a practicing ob-gyn for 25 years and served at Kaiser Permanente Colorado for 24 years, most recently as the vice president of government, external relations, and research. But whether she's in a delivery room or a boardroom, Allen-Davis says, "My role is to be calm under fire, provide signs that things are going well, and never lose hope." In February, she was recognized by *Modern Healthcare* as a "Minority Leader to Watch" in the magazine's annual list of Top 25 Minority Leaders in Healthcare.

While she never expected as an ob-gyn to someday lead a rehabilitation hospital, after her first visit to Craig she knew it was the right place for her. "I firmly believe that one of my roles on this earth is to be a warrior for the vulnerable, and no

one is more vulnerable than someone who's just been in a catastrophic accident," Allen-Davis says. "This patient population touched the warrior in me and the healer in me."

Allen-Davis explains that Craig patients often have to relearn how to do the things most healthy people take for granted, such as feeding themselves or going to the bathroom. And while she doesn't interact with Craig patients as a clinician, she contributes to their healing in another important way. "Patients stay here for weeks—sometimes months—and because I don't see them every day, I notice the progress—the miracles—that people closer to them may not. I'm able to say, 'Look what you can do!' and show them how far they've come."

Learning to compensate for their injuries, patients at Craig often discover that they're capable of more than they'd ever imagined, and being a part of that restoration also changes the lives of the people who work at Craig. "We are better because we get to serve these patients and their families," Allen-Davis says. "And what I like to ask is how do we in turn take that out into the world?"

For her part, one of the ways Allen-Davis takes it out into the world is by volunteering her time and expertise on numerous boards, including the Geisel Board of Advisors. "I am so grateful for all that I get to do

because of my experience at Dartmouth Medical School," she says. "Being a clinician, being able to relate to all kinds of people—that's the fruit of my time there."

She also believes that giving back is an important way to spread and recognize goodness in a world that can sometimes feel overwhelming. It's a simple way to make a difference—simple as shifting a baby's head.

LAUREN SEIDMAN

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