



## Rebecca Pinto, PA: A Legacy of Mentorship

Story by Stanford SPIN Fellow Danielle Menona

Rebecca was raised in a culture of mentorship and activism by her parents Cal and Laura Anderson. Activism was a central part of their Quaker faith. They came to California to open a Quaker settlement house. Her father worked at Contra Costa Juvenile Hall and then as a high school teacher and coach at Berkeley High. Her mother was one of the first graduates of UC Berkeley's MPH program. She directed the City of Berkeley Women's Health Center. Their positive impact ran deep in the community. Cal was awarded the San Francisco Foundation Award which is given to "*an individual demonstrating exemplary commitment to improving human relations in the Bay Area.*" Rebecca and her siblings were strongly influenced by their spirit of altruism.

She went off to college and majored in natural science, but her career path took a tumultuous turn when she wasn't accepted to medical school. Rebecca had various jobs in the health care field but was having trouble finding her niche. At a particularly discouraging point, one of the physicians where she was employed reached out to her. Rebecca recalls that he believed in her even at a time when she didn't believe in herself. He encouraged her to apply to get a degree to become a Physician Assistant, which eventually led her to Yale.

Rebecca credits not only her upbringing for her foundation in mentoring, but her education as well. She said that Yale teaches students to lead, publish and precept. She says the institution set the bar of excellence and she is following it. Since her very first job during PA school, Rebecca has been mentoring other students.

Mentoring, as it turned out, was also one of the things that brought Rebecca and her husband together. Their careers evolved; Rebecca as a Physician Assistant, and Harlan, an Oncologist and clinical professor. Together, they have three grown children who have taken on the tradition of mentorship in various ways.

When asked about her role as a teacher, Rebecca continually brings the human aspect into both her style of leadership and medicine itself. She notes that part of medicine is the interface between people and the biology. Two of the main points she stresses for her mentees is to be fully present for your patients and to show that you care.

Perhaps the most telling of all is the words of one of her recent mentees, Ulysses Rosas, a second year medical student at Stanford School of Medicine.

*"I came to medical school with the desire to continue to do what I have always done. Work with under resourced communities to improve the quality of health care they receive. However, the*

*heavy workload of the first year curriculum really took a toll on my motivation, and I constantly felt a mental fatigue that made me question what I was doing in medical school. Working at Ravenswood and having Rebecca as a mentor helped breathe new life in me and reinvigorated my drive to work for disadvantaged and under resourced communities.*

*Rebecca is the type of person who will inspire you to think more critically about what you see every day in the clinic and help you obtain that sixth sense all medical providers need to anticipate the needs of their patients. Her patience and understanding make you comfortable to feel like a student, and her initiative and mental quickness challenge you to think beyond your years as a student. I felt like my opinion and knowledge as a student mattered, which gave me the confidence I needed to speak with patients every day.*

*She has personally influenced me to be a better person and to be a sharper, more active student. For the longest time, I was hesitant to accept my new responsibilities as a member of the medical community, but working every day, side by side, with Rebecca made me embrace it, love it, and grow from the challenges I will face as a future physician.*

*Mentors like Rebecca are hard to find. Not everyone will take the time to talk to you everyday like she will. A lot of things happen in a clinic day that necessitate a period of reflection in order to absorb everything there is to learn. Having Rebecca as my mentor gave me the space to reflect on my clinic day, and during this time I learned a lot about my habits and tendencies when it comes to clinical reasoning. It's people like her that keep the dream alive for students like me. That dream is that no matter where you started in life, it's your determination, your humility, and your drive to provide compassionate patient-centered care that will determine how successful you are as a health care provider."*

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