

Devah Pittman: ‘Rural healthcare is my passion’

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Devah Pittman, a member of First Baptist Church in Clarendon, Texas, is a licensed and certified physician assistant with Clarendon Family Medical Center and has been in healthcare since 2007. From deep in the heart of one Texan, Pittman shares her background and thoughts on being a follower of Christ in healthcare. To suggest a Texas Baptist leader in the marketplace to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where else have you served in healthcare, and what were your positions there?

Clarendon Family Medical Center is a rural healthcare clinic that services multiple counties. The nearest clinics and hospitals are 60 miles away.

My practice focuses on preventive care and disease management, but I treat acute conditions as well. We function as an extended family practice and urgent care center. My day typically includes managing chronic medical conditions in adults and elderly, doing specialized physicals, well-child care visits, treating acute illnesses and assessing acute injuries.

Rural healthcare is my passion, and it is my desire to dispel the myth that patients will not receive exceptional care in a rural setting.

In the past, I also have worked in the urgent care setting and provided care to patients as part of the indigent care program for Amarillo.

Where did you grow up?

I split my youth between Allen—a suburb of Dallas—and Whitesboro—a small North Central Texas community. I always say I miss trees and lakes, but I love the people and sunsets in West Texas.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I was fortunate enough to have many amazing Christian women in my life who took me to church throughout my childhood. At age 12, Christ spoke to my heart in a big and real way. I prayed a prayer of salvation and was baptized. I was gifted with a strong sense of conviction from a young age, and it has guided my life choices.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

- Associate in Science, Clarendon College, 2002, magna cum laude
- Bachelor of Science in biology, West Texas A&M University, 2004, cum laude
- Master of Science in physician assistant studies, University of St. Francis, 2007

About life in healthcare

Why do you feel called into healthcare?

I had a desire to practice medicine from a very young age. It was a way to combine my love of learning and applicable science with my desire to have a career focused on helping others. I developed a passion for rural healthcare and serving underserved communities after moving to West Texas and seeing the existing need.

My career lets me provide individualized care to patients in a way nearly

impossible in a metropolitan area. I also was able to find a good work-life balance in the rural lifestyle that fits my family.

How does being a Christian influence your decisions in healthcare?

I have to admit I left my current position for nearly two years to follow my dreams, full of worldly desires and standards. God humbled me and redirected my life. I believe I now am exactly where he wants me to be, serving those he wants me to serve.

Also, I always wanted to take part in overseas medical mission trips, but through spiritual growth, I have come to realize my mission field is all around me, right where I am.

My faith motivates me to continue to practice medicine to the best of my abilities despite adversity. I sit in my car every morning before I walk into my clinic and pray that God uses me to do his work and that I am humble enough to follow his guidance when making decisions with and for my patients.

I continue to be a strong advocate for equal care regardless of financial or demographic status. I believe my very visible role in my community as a medical provider and as an active member in my church allows people to see the connection between my faith and professional life and adds a certain level of accountability.

What is your favorite aspect of healthcare? Why?

One of the most difficult things about healthcare is also something that draws me to it, the ever-changing landscape of medical information. In order to provide the best care possible, you have to be a dedicated lifelong learner and be willing to stay up to date. It requires humility to adapt or change your practices to the most current recommendations, as well as to

make them work for your individual patients.

What one aspect of healthcare gives you the greatest joy?

My patients are my greatest joy. I love seeing patients from infancy until the last stages of their lives. I love seeing multiple generations of families. I love celebrating and crying with my patients. I love watching my young patients mature into adults and start families of their own. It is a privilege to be a part of their story, and I love doing life with them.

What one aspect of healthcare would you like to change?

I would like to see people view their healthcare from a preventive standpoint. Most of the care we provide is reactionary. If we all focused on living our lives as healthy and full as possible, then it would prevent a lot of chronic and acute conditions. This would help alleviate a lot of the financial burden of healthcare, which is frequently a limiting factor for patients.

I also believe more emphasis should be placed on preventing obesity in children, as this will play a major role in the landscape of healthcare in the near future.

What did you learn on the job you wish you learned elsewhere?

I have had to learn not everyone is going to like me. It is my job to provide a certain standard of care and do my best to adapt that to individual patient needs and desires, but sometimes this can be a difficult road to navigate.

I encourage all patients to find a provider they have a good rapport with, because not everyone "is a good fit." Having open and honest dialogue with your healthcare provider will improve your overall healthcare experience

and outcomes, in my opinion.

What do you wish more people knew about healthcare?

I wish people understood healthcare is evolving, because science is not stagnant.

People who practice medicine are human and occasionally will make mistakes. Please extend them grace, especially if they are humble enough to admit when they are wrong.

Additionally, I would encourage others to take responsibility for their choices that directly impact their overall health and well-being. We should consider everything we put in our bodies—physically and mentally—as a form of medicine and examine the risks and benefits carefully. We have only one body, and our physical, spiritual and mental health all have an effect on that body.

About Devah

Why are you Baptist?

My church membership goes deeper than doctrine; however, I believe the Baptist denomination encourages an open-arms faith, puts emphasis on discipleship and spiritual growth and is biblically based. For these reasons, combined with an individual church that focuses on the importance of fellowship, I am a member of the First Baptist Church of Clarendon. I am fortunate to have the church family I have and could not imagine my life without their unconditional support.

Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors, and explain why.

I can't underemphasize the effect Brene Brown and her work has had on

my life in the last few years. Read anything by her. She speaks to the importance of authenticity and vulnerability, which frequently is overlooked in the church, though I think it is scripturally supported. In fact, I believe moving away from an individualized, self-sufficient culture and learning to do life with one another is the key to revival in our churches.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

I always have been particularly fond of the book of Galatians. It encompasses the testimony of a sinner, acknowledges believers can fail but are able to return to their faith, gives direction on how to live our lives, and encourages us to live by the Spirit and not worldly standards.

Additionally, Psalms and Proverbs are full of reminders to turn continuously to Christ and praise him—especially when we have experienced hardships—and not to rely on our own understanding. I need these constant reminders.