

Resident physician is also 'great mom'

NARINA SCHULZ • CONTRIBUTING WRITER • FEBRUARY 25, 2009



LeKeyah Quinn (cq), left, bounces her nine month old son Quinn Wilson, right, in their Brighton home. Quinn and her husband are both residents at Strong Memorial Hospital and because of an organized schedule, are able to balance their work and care for their son. (ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer)

RELATED NEWS FROM THE WEB: UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER, PEDIATRICS, FAMILY

LeKeyah Quinn is a mother first and pediatric resident second. She manages to make her baby, Quinn Wilson, her top priority while balancing a career that sometimes requires her to work a 27-hour shift at the hospital. However Quinn says her residency experience at University of Rochester has been fantastic.

"I love working with the other residents. We have so much fun together that I love what I do. There isn't a day I don't enjoy going to work," Quinn said.

Many of the pediatric residents who work with Quinn find her optimism contagious.

"Everybody loves working with LeKeyah. She's smart, she has a great sense of humor and always sees the positive side of things, and not to mention a great mother to her baby boy," Sarah Collins McGowan, M.D. said.

Quinn credits her fiancé, Anwar Wilson, an emergency medicine resident, plus her family in the Rochester area and colleagues at the University of Rochester for helping her manage a successful career, the baby, home life and her personal life.

"It's such a nurturing environment in helping me become the type of physician I want to be. It takes lots of studying and hard work and lots of sacrifices. It hasn't slowed me down to start a family. I have lots of support. My family has been like a cornerstone in supporting me through the entire process," Quinn said.

Quinn, a Rochester native, plans on doing a fellowship in adolescent medicine when she finishes pediatric residency.

"I hope to be known as that community provider for adolescents so they know they have someone to go to for mental health, medical issues and mentorship. I want them to know they have someone in the community who cares about them," Quinn said.

Quinn's resume already includes a bachelor's of science and medical doctorate. She has one year left in her pediatric residency. She will then spend three more years doing a fellowship, and after that will finally be able to practice independently as an adolescent pediatrician.

Meet LeKeyah Quinn, M.D.

Profession: Pediatric Resident at University of Rochester

Education: M.D. from University of Rochester, B.S. from Howard University

Age: 30

Hometown: Penfield, NY

Family/Relationships: Son: Quinn Wilson and engaged to Anwar Wilson, M.D., Emergency Medicine resident. Parents: Mark and Mary Quinn.

Hobbies: Loves the outdoors and going on the canal, dancing with her baby, and recently started scrapbooking.

What is residency like?

Residency is tough, demanding, time consuming, yet very rewarding.

How do you stay awake and work 27 hours straight?

It's actually amazing that you can stay awake. It's that adrenaline that gets you pumping, that you're taking care of these kids, that you're the only person, one of the few in the hospital left. You're responsible for the well being of these individuals making sure nothing goes wrong overnight or while you're on call. There's just always so much to do. The hospital never sleeps.

Why did you decide to become a physician?

Ever since I was in fifth grade I knew I wanted to be a kids' doctor. At the time I didn't know it was a pediatrician. I really enjoyed mentoring. From then on, I was focused; always trying to get good grades, taking honor classes in high school, and even when I went off to college my major was pre-med. I did lots of volunteering and making sure that was the correct career choice. I was always very curious how the human body works and what was inside. One of my favorite subjects was anatomy.

How has your baby, Quinn Wilson, changed your life?

It's made me appreciate life a lot more, realizing there's so much more than just school and a career. It's made me schedule all my time. He always comes first. It's difficult at times, when I may not be able to put him to sleep, or drop him off to day care, and I feel like I miss out on a lot of developmental milestones, but I try to spend as much time as possible with him. It gives me a different insight into my profession. Having a child of my own I can understand what parents are going through. I can offer advice for things I have tried what's worked and what hasn't worked. I'm a little more compassionate because it hasn't been easy!

How do you manage taking care of Quinn and a job that sometimes requires you to work 80 hours in a week?

We have a system. The first thing was finding a day care that opened early enough for our schedule. 12 Corners opens at 6:30 a.m. and closes 6 p.m. Usually if I'm working days, Anwar is working overnights, or vice versa, so it usually works out. Every so often our schedules overlap and I have a great extended family that helps out with watching Quinn. It's a good thing he's a friendly baby. We really share the child care between the two of us and our crazy schedules.

What keeps you sane and happy? Do you have any advice to other young professionals or working mothers?

I know there's a light at the end of the tunnel. Every day is not full of roses. At times it's very, very, difficult and there are days I do get stressed because there is so much on my plate. Every so often I have to just sit back, relax, take time to myself and look around and see what I'm actually grateful for. I have lots of blessings and I realize this is a temporary situation. It soon will be over and I will have more time with the baby, and with Anwar, and hopefully have more kids someday. It's also great to have co-workers in the same situation, so that we can give each other advice. You'd be surprised how many residents have kids.

I know some people say 'how are you doing this?' I agree at times, but every time I look at my son I never regret it. It's amazing what you will do for your kids, the power of the love of a mother. In the beginning it's hard, but it gets so much better. He's nine months and soon he'll be walking and talking, he'll be a little person. It's so much fun to watch him grow.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

Besides the birth of my son, when I graduated from medical school I was honored to win the Haggerty Award, who was the former pediatrics chair of the University of Rochester. He's kind of the father of pediatrics in Rochester. He helped start the care track where we have community links through pediatrics. He was one of the founding supporters of the program. I was pretty honored to win that award.

What are your goals?

I'm hoping to change the health practices of our youth. You tend to see less and less adolescents in the doctor's office. Usually they come in for well-child visits because they need sports physicals or work papers. They never seem to come in for information about preventing pregnancy or other health issues. It would be great to establish that adult mindset of being in control of their health.

What did you have to do to get to this point?

I was a pre-med. major in college, and had to go through the hard core sciences, all the biology labs and organic chemistry. I interviewed at University of Rochester because I was from Rochester. The first day I interviewed after meeting the other medical students, I knew it was the right place. They were just so happy they were energetic and excited about learning. Once I was at University of Rochester I made a lot of great friends and met a lot of mentors. During my year out doing research on pediatric obesity I really loved the adolescent population, and that's how I knew for sure that I wanted to do pediatrics and do a fellowship in adolescent medicine. When it came time to apply for residency, I compared all the programs to University of Rochester. It was such a perfect match for medical school and the residency program is fantastic. I was ecstatic to be accepted here.