

I do feel that it is absolutely crucial to know a patient's background and personality to see how best I can help her as a doctor." As her brand of clinical practice, Dr Gopalakrishnakone aims to be holistic in every aspect of her approach, to ensure the comfort and satisfaction of the patient and her family. As a mother to three beautiful daughters, Dr Gopalakrishnakone is able to use all her pregnancy and postnatal breastfeeding experiences to help patients through their own pregnancies.

In some cases however, when women face the choice between their own mortality and losing the ability to reproduce, Dr Gopalakrishnakone has to look for a compromise somewhere in between, despite the premise in obstetrics, which has always been that the health of the mother comes first: "It is easy to say that life-saving surgery takes precedence over fertility but one should never judge another until we've walked in their shoes," she explained.

Life-work balance

Doctors might have a crazy work schedule, but just like normal people they have families to take of as well. The dilemma has always been looking for that right balance between personal life and work. Indeed, Dr Gopalakrishnakone is not an exemption: "Despite my busy workload, I stretch my time for my children and ensure that they get the maximum wondrous experiences out of what life has to offer. Seeing my babies grow up healthy and full of character and brilliance brings immeasurable happiness."

However, Dr Gopalakrishnakone admittedly shared that practicing medicine definitely takes her away from family at the oddest of hours. "There are moments in church where I am staring at my iPhone



Photo Courtesy of Kong Kong Tony Lim

knowing a patient is in labour and anticipating a call; there are times where I get called in the middle of a family outing and everyone speeds with me to the hospital in the car when I'm called for a delivery," she explained. Crucial to understanding this hectic work schedule is the full support of her family: "My kids actually love it strangely enough, especially when they get to buy treats from whichever hospital I bring them to while waiting for me. My husband is a lawyer and his timings can also run quite late, but it's never as unpredictable as mine!"

A strong believer of work-life balance, Dr Gopalakrishnakone noted that she is very fortunate to have a strong support from both sets of grandparents to help her care for the kids' needs while she's at work.

Beyond medicine

Family life and medical practice is not just what all doctors do; Dr Gopalakrishnakone have other interests as well: "I have loved travelling since I was a toddler and I'm blessed to have travelled to beautiful places like Greece, Egypt, Venice, Prague, Vienna and Munich. Now it looks like my kids enjoy travelling as much as I do, so that's something I absolutely enjoy planning and doing," she shared.

Today, having been in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology for 14 years, Dr Gopalakrishnakone cannot see herself in any other profession. "Someone once said that if you find something you love doing, you won't work a day in your life; it definitely feels that way with my OBGyn practice," she explained.

When we asked for some words of wisdom she'd like to convey to aspiring young doctors out there, she said: "Be sincere, passionate and honest in everything you do. If you truly feel and behave that way, it shines through for all to see, including your colleagues and especially your patients. As Dr Normal Vincent Peele once said, enthusiasm makes a difference; always take time to bond with your patients and listen to their life stories as many times as possible. That would help in tailoring your treatments and management protocols, thus benefiting them immensely." **MG**