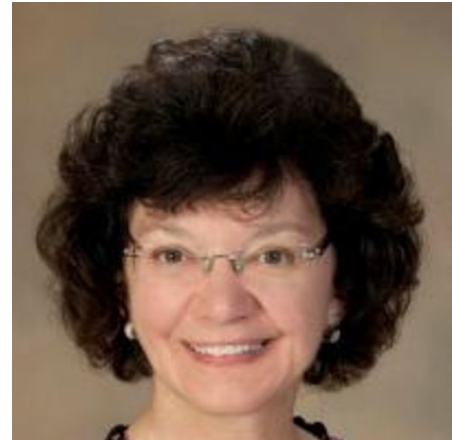


Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Janet Teodori

What is your area of focus and educational background?

I was a linguistics major at Tufts University and studied Japanese, theoretical linguistics, phonology, and language development; it was the latter subject that led me to medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, where my medical application essay showed an interest in pediatric neurology, although I would not have identified that at the time. I was married in medical school and moved with my husband, who was completing a surgery residency, to Pittsburgh. At the University of Pittsburgh Children's Hospital (now UPMC), I completed both a pediatric residency and child neurology fellowship and became board certified in both fields. I also took the epilepsy board certification exam and was grandfathered into epilepsy specialization.



I was always interested in child development and had a particular interest in neonatology as well as epilepsy. When I returned to work at the Phoenix Children's Hospital after more than 15 years out of medicine, I worked daily in the NICU as the consulting neonatal neurologist. Along with the head of the NICU at that time, we developed a neuro-NICU, providing a state-of-the-art hypothermia treatment protocol for asphyxiated infants and a neurodevelopmental follow-up program.

How did your residency prepare you for your current position?

I returned to work, having raised three children with my heart surgeon husband, when I was 52. I worked at Phoenix Children's Hospital and the Diamond Children's Medical Center in Tucson, AZ, from 2004 to 2017. I retired in 2017 at age 65 to pursue a different passion. Had it not been for the exceptional training I received at UPMC in pediatrics and child neurology, I never would have been able to regain sufficient skills to return to a full-time child neurology practice. It was a lot of work to get back into medicine, as neurology had changed significantly in the time that I was off, but I did the work, and it was definitely worth it to me personally. I was saddened that my career was shortened, but happy that I could spend the time with my young children, particularly since their father was "always working."

I am grateful every day for the vast and totally engrossing experience I had while training at UPMC. The attendings staff was small at the time (five members became seven), but brilliant, dedicated, ethical, and supportive. There were only three or four child neurology fellows, one or two per year, and it was an honor and a pleasure to be a part of that team. I saw many interesting and complex patients, with active staff discussions about their

diseases and their care. I was given as much responsibility as I could take on. I could not have asked for more in-depth training.

What was your most memorable time as a resident?

Perhaps surprisingly, three of the most memorable clinical events were times when I, as a fellow, did not perform at my best. In one instance, a patient died of status epilepticus, perhaps because I didn't contradict the patient's attending. Another time, I gave an incorrect treatment suggestion in rounds and was unflinchingly told of the error. Lastly, I scurried to find metabolic therapy for a patient, who the attending realized did not have a metabolic disorder. These were humbling experiences and taught me to always question and think deeply about a problem. None of us start out perfect as we begin our medical "practice." It's always better to have "eyes wide open" and know how to speak up when needed.

There were other times when I felt very successful and found great pleasure in the work. It is a privilege to become intimate with other people's lives and families in the course of medical treatment. All is in the effort of doing what is best for the children.

What recommendations or advice would you give to an incoming resident?

It is so different for residents now than when I trained. We worked much longer hours and typically were awake for 36 hours during "call" days/nights. We spent a lot of time with the patients in the rooms, examining them. We did our own procedures, including LP, IV, blood draws, and even gram stains. We moved fast and ate sporadically on many of the rotations, but we had great camaraderie, for the most part.

In this era where AI is becoming more capable of making accurate diagnoses and imaging is often more critical to a diagnosis than the physical exam seems to be, I don't know that my advice is relevant for one's current practice.

However, of human interest generally is my belief that you let your heart guide you to the part of medicine where you feel the most connected. There can always be some joy in what you are doing. "Working hard" does not have to mean "working miserably." In the long run, there is great satisfaction in "giving it all you got!" The more you study, the more you know, the more interesting it becomes, and the more questions there are. Don't be afraid to "dig in"—deep is where the treasure lies.

What was your favorite spot in Oakland (or Pittsburgh) to go to?

Pittsburgh was one of my favorite cities to live and work in. I loved Schenley Park, Shadyside, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, the Carnegie Science Museum, the Frick Pittsburgh Museums and Gardens, Kennywood, and Station Square. Some restaurants that we loved in Station Square and Downtown are no longer there, and I am sure that much has changed since we left Pittsburgh in 1989. But I will always remember the years there, from 1981 to 1989, fondly.