

#GettingToKnowDOS— Dr. Catherine Kling



In this issue, we had the pleasure to interview Dr. **Catherine Kling**. Dr. Kling joined the department in August 2018 and is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Transplant Surgery.

SS: What do you consider to be the best decision you've ever made?

CK: Probably marrying my husband. He's not in medicine so he does a good job of keeping me balanced. He's also much less serious than I am—more of a joker so he keeps the fun side of me alive as well.

SS: What do you consider to be the worst decision you've ever made?

CK: Trying 400 Degrees Hot Chicken in Nashville. It turns out that you can sweat from more places in your body than I ever knew!

SS: Where is your hometown?

CK: I grew up in Melbourne, Australia. My accent is mostly gone but you can make it out a little bit when I say anything with an O or A. I lived in Melbourne, Australia until I was 16 then moved to Tokyo, Japan where I lived for three years. Then I moved to the U.S. in 2000 for college and medical school, then married my husband.

SS: What do you miss about Melbourne?

CK: My parents, brothers and extended family are there as well as a few friends so it's the people I miss. We go back once every other year or so for visits. It's a very long trip: you've got to first get from here to either San Francisco

or Los Angeles then it's about 15 hours to Melbourne. With just myself and my husband it's not an issue, but now we have two kids. My five-year-old has done it twice and she has been great. Now with my one-year-old, we'll see-- she's not good at sitting still.

SS: Which life achievements are you most proud of?

CK: My two daughters are pretty great. Hannah's five and Hazel just turned one. I had Hannah my fourth year of residency and I had Hazel my first year as an attending. Despite all of the long hours, the fellowship training, etc., they've turned out to be pretty good kids despite me not always being there. That goes back to my best decision, which is my husband, who takes on raising the kids and doing household things such as cooking and cleaning because I'm at work a lot.

SS: What was your least favorite class subject in high school?

CK: History. [Laughs] I think in some ways this is related to being a surgeon. I like physical things—the things that you can see and visualize. History was just these random dates and occurrences and that's hard for me to get my mind around.

The school I went to in Japan was called the American School in Japan and all students had to take American history in 11th grade. My best friend, who was from New Zealand, and I petitioned the school saying this requirement was ridiculous. Why do we have to take American history when we weren't American, don't live in America and never plan to live in America? They said no, we had to take the class, and my friend and I actually ended up receiving a history award that year. Now 20 years later here I am living in the United States, and she actually lived here for five years also!



Catherine with her husband and two daughters in the Methow Valley



Catherine with her parents at residency graduation

SS: Who has made the biggest impact in your life and why?

CK: Probably my parents. They provided a very supportive environment for my brothers and I, but more than that, they let us make many of our own decisions (with some oversight of course). But it was really up to us. I remember when I was graduating from high school in Japan, I had the choice to go to university in Australia or come to the United States. I didn't know what to do and wasn't sure if I was going to go into medicine at that point so my dad said, you have an opportunity to make whatever decision you want. If you go to the United States and it doesn't work out, you can always come back to Australia. I don't know if when he said that 20-some years ago he realized that I would still be here with his only grandkids. [Laughs] But there was no pressure. My parents gave us lots of opportunities and allowed us to make our own decisions and supported us along the way with however it ended up.

SS: What is your favorite Amazon purchase?

CK: I don't know if this was actually purchased on Amazon but it's my favorite purchase. I get really, really cold. Like really cold. So my husband bought the equivalent of the Bair Huggers we use in the OR for our home bed. So before I go to bed, I turn the Bair Hugger on, brush my teeth, wash my face, then get into bed and it's toasty warm.

SS: Tell us something about yourself that nobody knows.

CK: I've ridden my bike across the country twice. The first time was in 2003 and the second time was in 2005. It was a fundraising trip for an organization called Bike and Build to raise money for and awareness of affordable housing causes. You raise money throughout the year then over the summer there is an eight or nine-week trip where you ride approximately 70 miles a day. Then maybe one day a week you stop and work on a Habitat build site or some other affordable housing project. The group then decides how to distribute the money it raised through grants to different affordable housing organizations that have applied. The first ride was from Maine to Vancouver, Canada and then the second ride was from Virginia Beach to Cannon Beach. It's an annual event that is still going today. The second time I did it I was one of the leaders. You have to set up all the housing along the way and then you drive a 15-passenger van with a trailer so you're not carrying all your stuff. It was pretty spectacular.

SS: What do you consider to be the biggest challenge in your life that you had to overcome?

CK: I didn't really see it as a challenge at that time but I think in hindsight, it was. I was 18 or 19 years old when I moved to the United States. I didn't know anybody here and I didn't have any family here and I went to Dartmouth, which is a small town in the middle of nowhere in New Hampshire. I had to build my support network there from the ground up in college and then when I went on to medical school—expanding my community and network as I went along.

Now my community in the United States is far bigger than in Australia. I didn't see it as a big choice, decision or something that I really had to overcome, but looking back now that I have kids, it's like, would I really send my kid halfway across the

world with no one there? I guess that's again going back to my parents letting me make my own decisions and figuring it out along the way.



Catherine at the top of Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park - 12,183 feet!