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Dr. Angelo Ratini

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A Place of Care and Connection

At Lower Bucks Hospital, the husband-and-wife team of **Drs. Angelo and Melinda Ratini** lead a geriatrics-focused family practice that empowers patients to actively participate in their health.

by **BILL DONAHUE**
 photos by **JODY ROBINSON**

Angelo Ratini, D.O., was born and raised in western Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, while Melinda Ratini, D.O., came of age in the Philadelphia suburb of Bristol. They met at the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, where they were working toward their medical degrees, and quickly formed a close bond. In fact, they wound up getting married over spring break toward the end of their second year, just prior to starting their rotations.

Today, the Ratinis co-lead a family practice within Lower Bucks Hospital in Bristol. They treat patients of all ages, though their practice

focuses largely on seniors. “Our medical school was primarily focused on family medicine, and also rural medicine, so we naturally gravitated toward family medicine,” Dr. Angelo recalls, adding that the couple moved to the Philadelphia area to complete their medical residencies at Delaware Valley Medical Center, now known as Jefferson Bucks Hospital. “After we opened our practice in Bristol, we realized we were seeing many more older patients. It seemed only natural to get our certification in geriatrics.”

Board certified in family medicine, the Ratinis treat each patient in a holistic manner, which means they focus on the mind, body, and spirit, as well as the interconnectedness among all three. They see themselves not only as physicians but as educators who strive to empower patients to become active participants in their care.

Dr. Melinda cherishes the bonds she gets to establish with older patients. She says these individuals appreciate the opportunity to have in-depth conversations about their health, as well as share stories about their lives, and they want to get to know their practitioners well. She likes to use the term *partnership*.

“Younger people are often in more of a hurry, but older patients want to take their time and have more of a relationship,” she adds. “They respect the fact that we get to know them and their families. Over the years we have taken care of generations of families, and that has been a very rewarding part of the work.”

Most of the patients the Ratinis treat tend to be over 50, many of whom have chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes. Those experiences, in turn, inform the doctors’ relationships with younger patients.

“Seeing the burden of disease on the elderly has given us a different perspective,” Dr. Melinda says. “We’re keen to address issues with younger people so they can stay healthy as they get older. That said, some younger people are not ready to think about themselves in that position.”

Dr. Angelo adds, “We impress upon our younger patients the need for prevention. It’s a common comment, but we’re all 21 in our minds and tend not to think of the consequences of our decisions and behaviors when we’re young. It’s gratifying when we can make a difference like that.”

The Ratinis’ spacious, handicap-accessible office is located in the professional building adjacent to Lower Bucks Hospital. The practice benefits from its proximity to the hospital and the full spectrum of health services offered there, but the doc-



Dr. Angelo Ratini



Dr. Melinda Ratini

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tors cite another key distinction: two devoted staff members who have been with the practice for more than 25 years.

“They’re an extension of the practice, and they definitely make our job easier and the patient visits more enjoyable,” says Dr. Angelo. “They make such a difference with everything, from knowing [patients’] medication history to helping them with any billing questions. And our patients are very grateful to them for that added layer of care. Patients will often show photos of their grandkids [to our staff members], and some have even been known to bring them vegetables from their gardens in the summer.”

Telemedicine, which the COVID-19 pandemic brought into the mainstream, represents a growing aspect of the Ratinis’ practice. While there’s no replacement for a face-to-face interaction between a physician and a patient, telemedicine has greatly enhanced the Ratinis’ ability to connect with patients. It has been especially convenient in treating frail or infirm patients, for whom leaving the home may be

an obstacle to non-emergent care.

Working closely with a spouse or a family member can be challenging for some, but not for the Ratinis. They practice in a similar manner and appreciate the opportunity to collaborate. Plus, they respect each other and genuinely enjoy spending time together.

“When we first started [the practice], we were like two ships passing in the night, where we were not in the same place a lot of the time,” Dr. Melinda says. “It’s nice to have someone you can trust to run something by, where you can pop in and ask, ‘What do you think about this lab [result]?’ Ang is here more than I am—I’m here two sessions a week, and he’s here every day—but for the times we are here together, it works well for us.”

The Ratinis’ involvement in the medical

community extends far beyond their practice. Dr. Angelo serves as associate program director for family medicine at Lower Bucks Hospital, as well as chair of the family practice department. He enjoys the opportunity to work closely with new residents, which he describes as “a fun way to keep current.”

Dr. Melinda, meanwhile, has been working as a medical reviewer at WebMD for 12 years. Her goal: to provide accurate, understandable, and reliable medical information to WebMD’s 127 million readers. She says her two jobs complement each other well, as her WebMD gig enables her to “have a finger on the pulse of what’s trending in medicine.” In addition to her work with WebMD, Dr. Melinda serves as vice-chair of the family practice department at Lower Bucks Hospital.

“I grew up in this community, and I chose to stay local to give back,” Dr. Melinda says. “It definitely feels like we’re in a family practice here, in that our personal lives intersect with our practice in so many ways. We treat people the way we would want our own families to be treated, and our patients seem to realize and appreciate that. It was a good decision to practice in Bristol.” ■

→ Lower Bucks Hospital

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