

It's All About Attitude and Perspective

NJAFP board member Michael Cascarina, MD believes himself to be the luckiest guy in the world.

The self-described “crazy happy guy” has built a thriving privately owned, three-physician practice in Brick that enables Dr. Cascarina to practice medicine the way he enjoys – treating patients in a caring environment while developing strong bonds.

Like many family physicians, Dr. Cascarina treats patients of all ages – newborns to seniors – and has patients with two, three or even four generations of family members coming to the practice.

“Every day is different. We do pap smears, minor office procedures and joint injections, and even the occasional home visit,” he says. “The variation in the practice is what keeps things interesting.”

A mainstay in the community, Dr. Cascarina and *Our Family Practice* have called their Brick location home for 20 years, allowing Dr. Cascarina and his staff to develop relationships with neighboring businesses and residents.

“Our neighbors have become a second family,” says Dr. Cascarina. “We frequently visit each other’s businesses and talk about what’s been going on around town. A couple years ago, one of my patients who lives in the neighborhood behind the office was rebuilding an old car so I stopped to chat. Now, I spend most Friday afternoons in the summer working with him on his car.”

Patients and neighbors aren’t the only people who Dr. Cascarina has built relationships with during his 20 years. He often welcomes residents, medical students, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners into his office to gain some hands on experience.



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“It is amazing to be around people with such enthusiasm to learn,” he says. “They have very positive, engaging personalities.”

Dr. Cascarina is very much a people person and admits he likes to chat, which is an important attribute for family physicians. “Most of my patient visits are equal parts social and medical. I spend all day talking with patients – I know who just got a job, whose kid is going to college,” says Dr. Cascarina. “I can spend time with a patient who I’ve been seeing since he was child and we can catch up on the local election and then I can see an 85-year-old patient and we’ll laugh through most of the visit.”

When confronted with difficulties, it’s Dr. Cascarina’s positive outlook that keeps him upbeat.

“When the economy was bad, yes it hurt. When malpractice rates increased in the 1990s, that didn’t feel so good either. An insurance company may not compensate us as much as we’d like, but how much can I complain about? Overall, we’re doing well,” he says.

Through and through, Dr. Cascarina couldn’t be happier to be a family physician. Each day brings something different, but he can always count on seeing the familiar, smiling faces of patients, coworkers and neighbors.

“While I am a family physician by trade, part of my job has nothing to do with medicine. I listen to my patients and build meaningful relationships with them,” says Dr. Cascarina. “In terms of importance, if the practice is doing well, money is way down the list. I just want to make people happy and healthy.” ▲



Quiz ANSWERS: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True; 6. True; 7. False; 8. True; 9. False; 10. True