

# HEALTHY GENERATIONS

## DR. JULIE ZENGER HAIN

There are many childhood experiences that may influence your career choice as an adult. For Dr. Julie Zenger Hain, director of clinical cytogenetics at Oakwood Healthcare System, her experience was influenced by a medical family history.

“I have a family history of osteogenesis imperfecta, which is a brittle bone disease,” she says. “I always had an interest in people and biology, and I found human genetics to be interesting. With that and the family component, I went to get my doctorate in human genetics.”

Now she is encouraging others to educate themselves about their family history so they can stay healthy and help future generations do the same.

As the director of clinical cytogenetics, Zenger Hain balances her time between genetic counseling, the laboratory and public health initiatives for genetic awareness. She says the most common illness that is tested for is cancer, but cardiovascular disease and prenatal testing are also common.

In the public health arena, Zenger Hain has worked with the Michigan Department of Community Health in programs that are related to genetics. She is also co-chair of the Michigan Cancer Genetics Alliance, a group of genetic specialists with an interest in cancer. “The public health end is important because we are trying to create awareness within the community. We want people to become aware of the importance of their family history so they can obtain information, share it with their doctor and do something about it,” Zenger Hain says.

She is especially grateful for the support that Oakwood has given her to expand both her department and the public health initiatives for awareness. “This was a very small department with no genetic counseling,” she says. “We have grown from a clinical end. Oakwood has done a wonderful job in giving me opportunities to develop the program and [has] been open to the idea of genetics education. They have allowed me to really show my interest in the laboratory, one-on-one with patients, and in the community with the public health.”

With her efforts of saving lives through family history and creating community awareness, Zenger Hain also takes pride in being a living example for her patients and family by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. “I have two healthy children. I am doing my best to be a role model for them. They are teenagers, and along with my husband, we all work out together. Even with speaking engagements, it is hard to get up and talk in front of the public about healthy changes unless you are doing it yourself,” she says.

Zenger Hain also stresses the importance of support. “We are more successful in making changes if you are doing it with people supporting us.” 👑 —Yvette Stines

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photo: Andrew Potter