

# Q&A

WITH DARVIN FOO, PA-C, MMSC, PT  
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT, SHEPHERD CENTER  
INTERVIEWED BY JANE M. SANDERS

**Q: After working for 17 years as a physical therapist, you decided to continue your training and become a physician assistant. Why did you pursue this career change?**

**A:** Upon turning 40 years old, I started thinking about the career change. I had a full career as a physical therapist (PT), a manager and guest lecturer. But I had become a little complacent, needing a new challenge. I had a lifelong, unfulfilled interest in medicine. Around that time, my mother passed away. That event made me re-examine my life, wondering what to do with the finite remaining years. I realized that I wanted to approach patient care from a different angle with a career in medicine. The combination of these circumstances led me to become a physician assistant (PA).

**Q: From the patient's standpoint, what qualities make you an excellent physician assistant?**

**A:** I begin every day with the intention that I might be an agent for healing and compassion. I try to treat every patient or family member with the same dignity and respect that I would want for my own family. I take the time to listen to patients, being present to their needs and concerns. My 15 years as a PT in pediatrics taught me that in order to get the best out of my patients, I had to first put them at ease and establish trust. I continue that tradition as a PA.

**Q: How does a physician assistant fit into Shepherd Center's team approach to rehabilitation care?**

**A:** I consider a PA to be part of a team, the most important member being the patient. As a PA, I function like an extension of the physician. I work in concert with the rehabilitation team to address medical conditions that may limit the patient's functional independence. For example, low blood pressure can limit how well a patient can participate in therapy. Resolving this problem enhances their performance in rehabilitation and leads to a more successful outcome. I rely on the team's input and assistance as they rely on mine. Working together, combining all of our expertise, we can achieve much for our patients.

**Q: Shepherd Center is known for some distinctive approaches to the practice of rehabilitation medicine. What aspects are most professionally rewarding to you and effective in producing excellent patient outcomes?**

**A:** I value working for a respected institution that is focused on patient-centered care. In rehabilitation circles, Shepherd Center is known worldwide. In the hospitals where I used to work, there was no funding for equipment like the Lokomat, FES bike and Zero G. We would dream about having that equipment and the things we could achieve if given the resources. Here at Shepherd, we have multiple FES bikes and three Lokomats. We are working with advanced new technologies such as the eLEGS system. We are a center of research for stem cell treatment. So we have incredible tools at our

fingertips. But as exceptional as the technology is, the human component is even more important. Shepherd Center is one of the few places I know of where everyone has a strong sense of purpose in working for the patient's welfare. It's the reason I decided to come here as an employee. With a sense of mission and purpose is the way I want to practice medicine.

## INTERESTING FACTS: DARVIN FOO, PA-C, MMSC, PT



### PA Training:

Emory University School of Medicine

### PT Training:

University of California, San Francisco

### Random Facts:

- Darwin Foo speaks fluent Spanish and basic French.
- He has traveled to Spain three times, studying Spanish art and literature history and Castilian Spanish.
- He has participated in numerous outreach clinics in Northern Mexico for children with burn injuries.
- Darwin and his wife had their first child, a daughter, in August 2011.



To read more of this interview and view more photographs online, visit [www.shepherdcentermagazine.org](http://www.shepherdcentermagazine.org)