



Dr. Tom Welch

MEDICAL SPECIALTY: Pediatrics and pediatric nephrology (kidney disease)

HOSPITAL AFFILIATION: University Hospital/
Golisano Children's Hospital

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree, Princeton University; M.D., McGill University; residency/fellowship, University of Colorado

Who was your most memorable patient?

I saw a 16-year-old boy in severe shock with a variety of other findings shortly after completing my residency. After excluding the usual known causes of shock, and treating him with a number of interventions, I suspected that I was dealing with a new disorder. I consulted with a colleague in Denver, who had seen similar cases. Together, we reported this as a new disease, which we named "toxic shock syndrome" in an article we published in the medical journal *Lancet* in 1978. Of course, the disease is now widely known. I have continued to keep in touch with this patient, who survived with no com-

plications.

What is the most exciting development in your specialty?

We are now able to identify very specific mutations in genes as the causes of diseases which have been recognized for centuries.

If you were "King for a Day," what would you change about the practice of medicine?

I would have the United States join virtually every other developed nation in the world by developing a single-payer health care system and considering basic health care as a right of citizenship.

What do you do to blow off steam?

Run marathons, backpack, mountain bike and climb.

What's one thing people do not know about you?

I am a licensed professional guide and teach wilderness skills in Alaska. (See my Web site for this activity, www.adirondoc.com.)

One bad health habit?

I haven't had a "routine physical" examination since I was 18 years old. Actually, I am not sure that this is a "bad" health habit. There is actually very little evidence that complete, routine physical examinations in otherwise healthy people are important.

One good health habit?

I take an aspirin and a glass of red wine daily.

What one thing does the medical community in Central New York need the most?

The Central New York community most needs what the rest of the country needs: universal, reasonably priced health care for all its citizens, along with the complete dismantling of the existing morass of health care insurers.

What is your greatest concern for the patients in your specialty area?

I am concerned that the growing epidemic of obesity in children will result in a population of adults with a heavy burden of chronic disease. ❖