

Dr Kristopher Kang

The pediatrician talks about his goals as a new *BCMJ* Editorial Board member, bringing medicine into schools, and accidentally getting into Princeton.

Tara Lyon

When you ask someone how thrilling it was to get accepted to Princeton, the last answer you expect to hear is “Well, it was kind of by accident!” Dr Kristopher Kang, who recently joined the *BCMJ* Editorial Board, tells the story of his Ivy League education humbly and with humor. His academic journey and subsequent career in pediatrics have been full of unexpected twists and turns, and they speak to his passion for learning, his willingness to embrace unusual opportunities, and his love of storytelling.

Dr Kang grew up in Kamloops—a simple childhood, he says, during which he had no idea he’d end up working in medicine. “My parents still live in Kamloops. My dad was a dentist, and my mom ran his office. Really, my only link to medicine at that point in my life was being a teenager who desperately didn’t want to do what my dad did,” he says with a laugh.

As part of differentiating his path from those of his parents (and of his classmates), he took an opportunity to complete part of his high school education abroad. He graduated high school early and had been accepted to the University of British Columbia, but he decided to complete a

2-year international high school program in Hong Kong before attending university.

Through the high school in Hong Kong, Dr Kang learned about the Davis United World College Scholars Program, which gives students from high schools around the world financial assistance to study at a number of prestigious schools in the United States. Somewhat on a whim,

he applied to the program and was accepted to Princeton. While he was excited about the educational opportunity and the prospect of being in a unique university environment, he was unaware of the true gravity of it all at the time. “As a young person, it was difficult for me to appreciate how big of a deal being accepted to Princeton was! I look back now

and think how funny it was to be lying in bed at age 19, tired, and wanting to skip a morning class that was being given by someone who won a Nobel Prize . . . nowadays, I’d probably pay to hear him talk!” He chuckles at the memory. “One of my mentors in residency said, ‘Education is wasted on the young,’ and it’s so true. At this point in my career, I’d love to have time to just study—not have to work at the same time and try to pack in CME.”

After graduating from Princeton, Dr Kang worked for a number of organizations in New York and around the world before deciding he wanted an advanced degree. This led him back to Canada to

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attend the UBC Faculty of Medicine, after which he specialized in pediatrics. “I’ve always been interested in learning about and supporting children and families,” he explains. “Before I was in medicine, I was involved in work around vulnerable children who were affected by HIV/AIDS, living and working on the streets, experiencing violence, and in some cases living in armed

Ms Lyon is a staff member of the BC Medical Journal.

conflict. After those experiences, a pediatric residency just made sense to me—having a general pediatric scope would enable me to help with problems that affect all children.”

In addition to working as a general pediatrician at BC Children’s Hospital, Dr Kang works with the Social Pediatrics Program in Vancouver’s Strathcona neighborhood, which operates out of a townhouse converted into a clinic. “We’re as low barrier as possible for a clinical practice,” explains Dr Kang. “I support children and families who face systemic barriers to accessing care, working predominantly with elementary age kids at their schools.”

“Schools are a powerful mechanism for engaging with families. They provide a scaffold that allows me to enter into a relationship with a family that might not otherwise have the interest, trust, or time to engage with a health care provider. It’s the lowest-barrier access point for families who want to talk about their kids.” The observational approach to providing care in schools—seeing kids interact with their friends and teachers in a classroom setting—allows Dr Kang to establish developmental diagnoses early, bypassing generally long waits for kids with developmental concerns to access diagnostics and supports. “We try to accelerate the process as much as possible, because the school depends on that information. If you’re on a 2-year wait list for an assessment, it can be years before the school gets the information it needs to benefit your learning and provide you with the supports you need in the classroom. Accelerating that process takes a huge team effort—we work closely with nurse practitioners and nurses as well.”

Dr Kang’s passion for helping kids comes through when he talks about his aspirations as a member of the *BCMJE* Editorial Board. “One of the things I hope to bring to the board is to ensure that children and families do stay in focus in the literature. Addressing health care for children and families is a powerful preventive measure for health care issues that show up later in life. We have a challenge ahead of us to make sure children aren’t left behind, and



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True to his nature as a lifelong learner, Dr Kang appreciates the opportunity to review and discuss the wide variety of articles submitted to the *BCMJ*. "Working with the board is such an amazing opportunity to learn things outside the pediatric domain," he explains. "I'm so focused on child health that it's hard to know what else is going on. The broad scope of the articles and the local nature of the content published in the journal is important in the medical literature, and it's great to feel like I'm a part of that."

Dr Kang's first editorial, "Beyond Kelowna: A wake-up call for child health in British Columbia," was published in the September issue [*BCMJ* 2025;67:234]. ■

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