

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Health Care's Health and Wellness program, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is one of the new physicians who has just joined Lake Region Healthcare, Dr. Kunal Kaushik.

Katie Johnson: He's a pediatrician who has joined our team of providers who have a passion for taking care of the children in our community, and helping parents ensure that our kids can be as healthy and well as possible.

Katie Johnson: So welcome to the team, Dr. Kaushik, and welcome to Fergus Falls.

Dr. Kaushik: Thank you very much.

Katie Johnson: Help us introduce you to the community. Tell me about your background, your education and experience, and where you're coming to us from.

Dr. Kaushik: I'm from India, from a small town called Hazaribagh. I don't know how difficult that is to pronounce.

Katie Johnson: Well, for me, more difficult than for you.

Dr. Kaushik: Yeah, so the name of the town translates into a thousand gardens or a thousand tigers, depending on what you prefer. So considering the town is near a tiger reserve, I go by the latter.

Katie Johnson: So is the thousand gardens indicative of ... Are there lots of flowers and pretty scenery?

Dr. Kaushik: Yep, yep. It's kind of hilly and it's heavily forested. So I think that's how the name came from.

Katie Johnson: Nice.

Dr. Kaushik: Yep. I studied medicine and later specialized in pediatrics at the University of Delhi. It's located in New Delhi. That's the capital of India. I worked there for some time and then moved to New York, after I was accepted in a pediatric residency at the Brooklyn Hospital Center. I also served as Chief Resident in my final year, before moving to Fergus Falls.

Katie Johnson: And what inspired you to go into pediatrics in particular?

Dr. Kaushik: Actually, I loved science from a pretty young age. I was really impressed with the importance of doctors in society and the role they play and the respect for the profession. And my family. My dad is a chemistry professor. He supported me, along with my mom, at every step and then medicine happened.

Dr. Kaushik: As far as pediatrics goes, during medical school, I was really fascinated by the resilience of children. And I loved the energy in the pediatric department.

Dr. Kaushik: I think we adults have a lot to learn from kids.

Katie Johnson: I think you're right.

Dr. Kaushik: Yeah. And for myself, I get a healthy dose of optimism every day I work with kids. Plus you get to be goofy too.

Katie Johnson: I like to be goofy. I like that comment about the resiliency and energy and that adults do have a lot to learn from kids. That's a great perspective.

Katie Johnson: How about choosing Lake Region Healthcare? What prompted you to, coming from India, and then New York, choose Fergus Falls?

Dr. Kaushik: That's what I keep telling people. I am from India and anywhere is far from home, so I could have picked any place. But I came to your town last year for a visit, and I basically loved to see all the smiling faces around.

Katie Johnson: That's great to hear.

Dr. Kaushik: Yeah, and plus, I think the team at Lake Region Healthcare is extremely professional and they are invested in their patients and their care. That's pretty important for me and all these reasons helped me take this decision.

Katie Johnson: Sounds like a great fit. Tell us a little bit more about your practice philosophy then. What's important to you in providing high quality patient care and following those same principles that you saw when you visited?

Dr. Kaushik: So one of my mentors in India whom I respect a lot told me at a pretty early stage that professional medicine is based on ABC. That's how he described it. A is for availability, B is behavior, and C is competence. And for him, all three came in that particular order. So I totally agree with him and I try to inculcate this into my practice. My ultimate thing is that I should be there when my patients actually need me. So that's what I aim at.

Katie Johnson: Availability, behavior, and competence. I like it. Do you have any areas of particular professional interest when it comes to pediatrics or children's health?

Dr. Kaushik: When I was in Brooklyn, I was involved in the Safe Sleep Project, where we educated and gave other training to healthcare professionals so as to prevent SIDS in the community. I think that was pretty important. I was also involved in research to see if providers needed more frequent training in neonatal resuscitation programs to take care of newborns.

Katie Johnson: What do you tell parents when it comes to SIDS when that training happens? Any tips you can share with our listeners?

Dr. Kaushik: I think it's pretty standard. I think the main things is about reinforcing that it's about very simple things, like keeping the crib horizontal, back to sleep, never leave the child alone in a crib with blankets, soft toys or anything. These are very small things that can make big difference, I think.

Katie Johnson: Reinforcing that message is important. You're working alongside a couple of great pediatric professionals here at Lake Region Healthcare. Dr. Angela Folstad and Amy Fisher, our Pediatric NP. Not to mention, a great team of primary care, family health, women's health team members. What are you looking forward to most about being a member of this team?

Dr. Kaushik: First of all, I have to say this. I feel very lucky to have such amazing colleagues. Since I started here, everyone has been so accommodating; everyone has been to helpful and welcoming. I believe as a professional, your colleagues are the most important part of your workplace. I think they are the biggest reasons why I decided to join the practice here. I look forward to working with them as a team to provide high quality care to the community.

Katie Johnson: I wanna throw in one question since we're doing this interview in August, and August is Immunization Awareness Month. I thought it was a good chance to bring up that topic and get your perspective about what you tell parents who maybe question or value the safety of certain immunizations.

Dr. Kaushik: I would like to tell those parents that, "Don't go by what I say or by what anyone else says, just go by facts." Here are a few facts that I picked up from well-respected sources. So the CDC, the Center of Disease Control, estimates that vaccines prevented more than 20 million hospitalizations and more than 700,000 deaths among kids born in the last 20 years. So that means that these mortalities and morbidities would have happened if we did not vaccinate all our kids. So these would have happened because of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Dr. Kaushik: Millions of vaccines are given to kids as well as adults in the U.S. every year and serious adverse reactions are extremely uncommon, and deaths caused by vaccines are very very rare. So that's what I tell parents, it's your choice.

Katie Johnson: Right. That's a good way to look at it. Look at the facts, and the facts do really speak for themselves.

Katie Johnson: How about when you're not working? What do you enjoy doing? What are your hobbies and your interests?

Dr. Kaushik: I like reading, fiction, non-fiction. I like listening to music. I like watching movies. I like hiking, and I like cooking.

Katie Johnson: How about anything else that you would like us to know about you or your practice that you would like to share with our listeners before we close?

Dr. Kaushik: I think we covered everything.

Katie Johnson: Well, Dr. Kunal Kaushik, pediatrician joining the team at Lake Region Healthcare. Welcome to Fergus Falls. Welcome to Lake Region Healthcare, and thanks for taking some time to let us get to know you today on Apple a Day.

Dr. Kaushik: Thank you for much for your time. Thanks.

Katie Johnson: Dr. Kunal Kaushik and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day today reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay health for it! Have a great day.