

Dr. Evan Lewis

Pediatric Neurology

Overview

1. **Profile:** Founder (Neurology Centre of Toronto), Assistant Professor (University of Toronto); Clinical Neurophysiology Fellowship (Nicklaus Children's Hospital, Miami), Epilepsy Fellowship (SickKids, Toronto), Pediatric Neurology Residency (Ottawa), MD (Ottawa)
2. **Projects:** Cannabinoids in treatment of epilepsy, concussion, headache; Tele-neurology
3. **Pitch:** Ability to make your mark; Children have a joie de vivre that makes the challenges of treatment worth it
4. **Path:** Throughout education, Dr. Lewis was never a "gunner," but fell into Pediatric Neurology from elective experiences; As a staff physician, made the rewarding choice of leaving the hospitalist setting to open up his own centre which he runs on his time and his terms.
5. **Personal:** Dr. Lewis was a pioneer in the use of cannabinoids to treat pediatric epilepsy in Canada.
6. **Philosophy:** Talk to Everyone, Listen to No One - you are in charge of your own destiny, don't take others' opinions to heart.

Elevator Pitch

(2:05)

- The reality is that it can be very challenging to work with complex neurological disorders, but kids have an innocence and will to improve that is incredibly inspiring.
- Ability to super-specialize while remaining a general neurological practitioner, potentially even seeing adults.

Personality

(5:09)

- Fluid personality - you need to adapt to personalities of both children and their parents.
- Empathy, adaptability and conscientiousness are vital to healthy communication during complex cases.

Stereotypes

(6:04)

- A 2020 medical school survey found perceptions of Pediatric Neurologists as **brainy**, **detail-oriented** and **bowtie-clad**, with complicated patients and limited treatment options.
 - **Response:** Perception is probably created early in medical school, especially because of perception of the brain as especially complicated - many physicians remain fearful of neurological aspects of medicine.
 - Objectively, it is **not more detail-oriented** than say, cardiology or immunology. Most medicine is cerebral and complicated.
 - At the end of the day, **neurology is just about pathways** - track the problem backwards and you can figure out what's going on.
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Referenced Material: *Jordan et al. Attracting Neurology's next generation: a qualitative study of specialty choice and perceptions. Neurology 2020 Aug 25;95(8):e1080-e1090*

Path

(12:19)

Medical School

- Always liked neurology, but didn't have the singular drive to pursue it.
 - Explored a variety of specialties including radiology, orthopedic surgery and urology.
- Experiences in Electives and Research piqued his interest and pulled him to neurology.
- **Beware the Trap:** If you are a good student, people will treat you well and you will feel like you belong. That's only **luck of the draw**, positive feedback loop. **Make sure you like the specialty, not just the people.**

Staff

- Life events shifted focus from hospitalist medicine to more private practice - frustrated with long **wait times** and hospital's **monopoly on complex cases**.
- Elected to leave SickKids and created the Neurology Centre of Toronto, designed similar to a hospital **outpatient clinic**.
 - Ability to administrate, lead a team, teach, do research, all **on his own terms and with his own standards**, with time for hobbies on the side.

- Allowed him to delve deeper into the use of cannabis in neurologic conditions, which at that time, wasn't supported at SickKids

Day-to-Day Life

(23:55)

- Monday
 - Morning - Off; Afternoon - Overseeing New Physician; Evening - Concussion Clinic
- Tuesday
 - Morning - Off; Afternoon - Headache and Migraine Clinic
- Wednesday
 - All-Day - Follow-up Clinic
- Thursday
 - Morning - Epilepsy Clinic; Afternoon - Cannabis Education Session
- Friday
 - Mostly administrative work and some cannabis appointments
- Morning 8-12, Afternoon 1-4, Evening 5-8
- Admin work is mostly done W-F; Weekends are almost always free.
- Consults last about an hour, Follow-ups last about 30 minutes
- Dr. Lewis and his team of 7 neurologists and many Allied Health Professionals developed “Virtual Rapid Access Clinics”
 - Tackle Epilepsy, Concussion, Migraine, Headaches, Cannabis treatments and soon Stroke
 - Walk-in style virtual clinic - 20-minute visit within 1 week of referral

Personal Takeaways

(36:20)

Personal Story:

*“Epilepsy is interesting - you are **either having seizures or you’re not** having seizures ... You give a medication and the seizures go away, which tells you the medication works at stopping seizures - it’s different from headaches, or anxiety or pain, which are more subjective. The big debate was: **“Does medical cannabis work for epilepsy?”** ... One of my very early encounters was a young girl who had an explosive onset of seizures, and **she was a perfectly healthy, developed little girl**. The seizures were frequent enough that she **started to regress** in her development. She started **losing the ability to walk**, her communication wasn’t as good, she seemed obviously tired and down. We tried different medications and nothing worked. Her **EEG was horrible**. So ultimately, acting independently, we authorized cannabis for this young girl. **Within 2-3 days, she stopped***

seizing and within 4 weeks, her EEG went to completely normalizing and she went from being unable to walk in a straight line to running and climbing and starting to develop perfectly again. This was on cannabis and nothing else.”

Note: While we tried to keep these transcriptions as true to the speaker as possible, some dialogue is paraphrased and/or edited for easier reading.

Final Comments

(41:24)

1. Explore as much as you can, but always keep your core values in the forefront as you make decisions. Don't let one good or bad experience make you like/dislike an entire specialty.
2. Communication is key - you need to constantly challenge yourself into difficult situations to gain the practice, because you will always need to be able to take on difficult situations. Acronyms aren't enough; real life never pans out in structure.
3. Talk to everyone, but don't take what they say to heart. Be honest with yourself - you have to make the ultimate decisions on your career.