

Dr. Douglas M. Lakin

INTERNAL MEDICINE

Dr. Douglas M. Lakin isn't your everyday doctor.

His patient rooms have themes, with rubber chickens, pictures of Einstein and movie stills adorning the walls. A cardboard cutout of the Three Stooges guides his patients to his office. And sometimes, he makes his patients wear a giant, curly brown Afro wig, and he takes their pictures.

That's right, Lakin is smart *and* funny.

"We don't take ourselves too seriously," Lakin says of himself and his staff. "Humor pervades the place."

Lakin, an internal medicine specialist, was born in Michigan but was raised in the Valley – he proudly displays his Chaparral High School diploma in patient room No. 2 (the doctor-themed room). He was at the top of his graduating class at ASU and was the first ASU graduate to be accepted to Johns Hopkins University for medical school.

"While I was in Baltimore [at Johns Hopkins], I thought I'd be a research scientist," he says, sitting behind the large, paper-scattered desk in his office. "But I found it wasn't my forte. I was more interested in patient care."

At Johns Hopkins, he gained recognition as "No-Laugh Lakin" in the school's student newspaper for dressing as a clown. Those were what he describes as his "Patch Adams" days.

After medical school, Lakin traveled to Iowa, where he completed his residency at the University of Iowa's Hospitals and Clinics. He says he became interested in internal medicine – the study of adult conditions – because it gives him a chance to expand his knowledge of a plethora of subjects.

"I like to know a little bit about a lot of things," he says.

Lakin moved back to the Valley in 1990 to join his father, Mervyn Lakin, in his practice in Scottsdale. At more than 30 years old, the practice is now the oldest in the area. For the past eight years, Lakin has been in the office on his own.

"People who knew my dad know me," he says. "It's continuity, which is sort of an anomaly for Phoenix."

Though Lakin likes to keep things lighthearted, he says he's ready when he has to deal with serious issues.

"We do deal with serious issues, and I don't want to make things sound trite," he says. "Some people are really sick."

But with a general medical practice, most patients come in just for reassurance, Lakin says.

"Patients worry, and it's beyond their ability to cope," he says. "They need reassurance. I hear their story and I say, 'You don't have to worry about that.'"

Throughout his office, evidence of Lakin's other passion is evident. Pictures of his family are scattered among medical books, and pictures of his four kids are pasted over the frames holding his diplomas. The hours Lakin keeps with his practice – Monday through Friday – allow him to spend weekends with his children, he says. But back in his office, Lakin says the most important issue is to connect with his patients.

With pictures of his staff (and their pets) in the lobby and the expertise of his receptionist, Barb, who can recognize regular patients' voices on the phone, Lakin seems like a natural.

"It's a great profession," he says. "For me, it's a calling."

— Tara Brite

