

Pediatric cardiology fellow to share how severe heart condition shaped his life

September 18, 2020

Carla Kemp, Senior Editor

Article type: [AAP National Conference & Exhibition](#)

Topics: [Cardiac Surgery](#), [Cardiology](#), [Cardiovascular Disorders](#), [Interpersonal & Communication Skills](#), [Transition to Adult Care](#)



Editor's note: For more coverage of the 2020 AAP Virtual National Conference & Exhibition, visit <https://www.aapublications.org/news/2020/08/21/nationalconference2020>.

It's no surprise that cardiologists have played a key role in the life of Thomas M. Glenn, M.D., who was born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome 30 years ago. But the physicians did much more than attend to his physical needs.

Dr. Glenn credits one cardiologist in particular with encouraging him to overcome his challenges and create a future for himself.

"...I've had other friends with the same cardiac disease that never really got that motivation from anybody growing up," he said. "And as a result, they never developed resilience at a young age like I was able to do."



Dr. Glenn will present the Stockman Lecture "Navigating the Chronic Disease Journey as a Patient and Clinician," sharing how he went from a child with severe congenital heart disease to a second-year pediatric cardiology fellow at Rady Children's Hospital, UC San Diego School of Medicine.

The lecture, which honors James A. Stockman III, M.D., FAAP, past president and former CEO of the American Board of Pediatrics, will be given during Sunday's plenary session from 2:05-2:25 p.m. CDT. It also can be accessed later [via the virtual platform](#) through

Jan. 31, 2021.

Dr. Glenn said by the time he was in fifth grade, he knew he wanted to become a physician, thanks in part to the encouragement he received from his cardiologist.

"It's important for people to realize that anybody in the health care field can affect somebody with a chronic illness at a very young age by motivating them and telling them that even though they have this chronic illness, they can develop their own future and overcome whatever they are dealing with," he said.

Like many parents of children with a severe chronic condition, Dr. Glenn's mom and dad worried about his health.

"When there's so much uncertainty with your chronic illness, I think parents often want to restrict children from doing the things that they love and creating these long-term goals because they're just not sure what's going to happen," Dr. Glenn said.

His cardiologist reassured his parents, who ultimately gave him the freedom to pursue his dreams.

"As I grew up, the goals kept getting bigger," he said. "I did things that nobody expected me to do like hiking the Grand Canyon, getting into med school and right now training for pediatric cardiologist."

During his presentation, Dr. Glenn also will discuss the importance of helping young patients learn how to manage their chronic conditions and later transition from pediatric to adult care. He will encourage viewers to take the time to be a motivating force in the lives of their patients with chronic illnesses just like his cardiologist was for him.

"Sometimes, all it takes is something as easy as a conversation, which is all it was for me."

Copyright © 2020 American Academy of Pediatrics