

The Rai/Sekhon 2017 Guidelines for Keeping Marital Problems in Remission

By Raman Rai, MD, FRCPC; and Suneet Sekhon, MD, FRCPC



Drs. Suneet Sekhon and Raman Rai with their daughter, Aria.

My wife is a rheumatologist and so am I. We work the same days, in the same clinic, and share the same office. In short, we spend A LOT of time together. People always ask if we ever get sick of each other and if we ever talk about anything else other than rheumatology. In fact, I have had more than one colleague tell me finding an alternate career should be my top

priority. Conventional wisdom states that distance makes the heart grow fonder, so what's the secret to keeping marital harmony when you are spending > 95% of your life with your significant other? Presented here are the five key recommendations of our latest guidelines (All are level FF recommendations - Follow or Fail)

1. Define your niche

This is easy if you genuinely have different interests but what if you both like the same area? Well, in that case you will need to work harder to differentiate yourselves professionally. In our practice, Dr. Sekhon will screen all consults and see patients with new onset inflammatory arthritis; Dr. Rai will see third opinions and referrals to "rule in fibromyalgia."

2. Dress for success

Nothing is more annoying for Dr. Sekhon than spending an hour with a patient, listening reflectively and coming up with a patient-centered care plan only to hear the dreaded "when is the real doctor coming?" Sadly, this means wearing a white coat over those fancy designer clothes.

3. Unlike the pizza, this is not a two-for-one deal

In the words of one patient: "I am a patient of this clinic, I see whoever can see me right away." That's great, but patients need to understand that Dr. Sekhon doesn't like Dr. Rai "messing" with her patients.

4. Play it cool

Pretending to ignore each other in the office has its benefits. One is that coworkers won't feel like they are intruding on your married life and the second is learning juicy gossip about the other person (e.g., "I saw that you were ignoring Dr. Rai today, he must have done something to make you upset...I heard that he also made a poor old lady cry." (In my defense... she started it.)

5. Take ANY opportunity to escape

This could mean something professional, like a journal club or conference, but let's face it, you will likely be going to these together. Instead, try to make unpleasant tasks like cleaning the house, mowing the lawn or picking up your child early from daycare into a relaxing break away from each other!

In all seriousness, while having a partner in the same field has its challenges, it is a positive experience overall (Dr. Sekhon: Dr. Rai's words, not mine). The most important recommendation is not to take things too seriously and try to enjoy your time together, regardless of whether you are at work or at home!

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