



Dr. Theresa Burick
DOES YOUR DOCTOR
REALLY KNOW
YOU?

By Mikell Worley



Stress melts away the moment you walk into the Burick Center for Health and Wellness located in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Immediately you sense that your needs will be met, whether you enter as a patient looking for health care or a writer conducting an interview. Hope, the aptly named receptionist, greets each visitor by name with a warm smile and asks if she can get them a drink or if anything else they may need. The environment is more reminiscent of a spa than a doctor's office, and my first thought was that I had misunderstood the center's function. This is unfortunate because we should expect a caring staff and a relaxed atmosphere at a doctor's office.

The center's founder and physician Dr. Theresa Burick promptly appeared and gave me her undivided attention from the time I entered the building until I left. When the phone rang she ignored it, confident that her staff would handle the interruption and let her know if there was an emergency. She prides herself on being a good listener. "Ninety percent of a diagnosis is in the person's history. When you take the time to listen and ask questions you can determine how past experiences, current health habits, and symptoms relate to their immediate concerns," she remarks. "Often they have two or more symptoms that seem unrelated but may well be significant in combination. There is a danger in listening to only one concern at a time. The more information they give me, the better I am able to determine their problem."

Dr. Burick believes that being attentive to her patients is one of her most cost effective practices. Sending patients for numerous tests can be stressful, time consuming, and expensive. "Tests should be used to verify and confirm an educated opinion based on discussions between the patient and the physician. They should not be used as random probing methods to rule out numerous possibilities. The cost of run-

ning too many tests, based on simply not taking the time to listen and assess, may well be one of the greatest costs in health care today."

Theresa Burick comes from a family dedicated to service and health care. She is the fifth of six children. Her father was born in Bombay, India, and after completing medical school, he traveled to England to enter residency training there as a general surgeon. Her mother left post-war Germany to study nursing in England. While there they met in the hospital, fell in love, and married. They remained in England for ten years, and then the couple decided to move with their three children to Darjeeling, India, to serve as that area's physician and surgeon.

The Buricks spent three years in Darjeeling enhancing and improving the medical care there. Following the birth of their fourth child, the family immigrated to the United States in 1965. Dr. Azizkhan completed his required residency training at Polyclinic Hospital in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. "He is an old time general surgeon," Theresa states with pride. "He did it all. At that time doctors didn't specialize. There wasn't any medical procedure that he couldn't do."

Theresa was born on October 4, 1967, and as a child she spent many hours helping her father in his office. By the time she was 12 years old she was taking blood pressure and changing bandages. Her love of medicine blossomed and Burick knew she would follow in his footsteps. "I have always had a passion for helping people. And I love being an advocate for those who don't know how to navigate the system," says Burick. "Health care has become more and more complicated and our patients need help on many levels."

Dr. Burick is committed to unveiling the mystery that often causes unnecessary fear in her patients. She views knowledge and information as the keys to unlocking understanding and trust. It is refreshing



to hear a physician acknowledge the value of her patient's insights and wisdom in regard to their personal health. It should be the norm and not an exception. "The word 'doctor' or 'docteur' is from the [Latin] word *docere* and it means to teach." Dr. Burick explained. "It is our job as physicians to help people understand."

"My mother . . . she is a wonderful woman. She taught me a very simple but powerful lesson. She told us to always treat people the way you would like to be treated. It levels the playing field. Everyone is equal. We all have different gifts and talents that we use in different ways. None of us is better – just different."

This respect for all humanity gives Dr. Burick the confidence to remove the walls often apparent between patient and doctor. It empowers her patients to feel that their opinions about their health care are valuable and to realize that they

"...always treat people the way you would like to be treated."



need to take an active role. This mutual respect enables them to engage in solutions in a partnership where both doctor and patient have a responsibility. There are additional benefits to this open communication. "My patients have complete access to their medical records through a secure clinical portal," Dr. Burick notes. "They can access them at any time over the internet. If they are on vacation and need to share information with a doctor in another part of the country or the world it can save time, money, and possibly even lives."

Dr. Burick's caring attitude and compassion prompted me to ask her if she had any experience as a volunteer. She answered softly, "In 1982 my brother who was a surgeon was killed by a drunk driver. I became very involved in Students Against Drunk Drivers (SADD), Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD), and other clubs that encouraged people not to drink and drive." Her story is familiar. The

woman who started MADD had a son who was also a surgeon. He was killed on a Sunday morning on the way to the hospital

As our interview concluded, and she walked me to the door, Dr. Burick glanced at the black doctor's bag on the floor by her desk. "I do house calls," she mentioned casually. "Of course you do," I said out loud. The black bag and the service it represented was completely in line with my impression that she would go out of her way to provide the best care for her patients.

There is limit to the number of patients Dr. Burick enrolls at the center (400 instead of the 1500 to 2000 in a conventional practice) in order to give them individualized attention and what she considers her most valuable asset – the gift of time. Patients begin their experience at the center with a two-and-a-half hour consultation with the doctor. They discuss medical

history, daily habits that contribute to the quality of their health, and have an opportunity to ask questions and build a relationship. They pay an annual fee equivalent to \$5 a day that can be reimbursed through insurance depending on services delivered. The return includes good health, peace of mind, education, and information including a newsletter, immediate access to their medical records, and a physician who is concerned with the well being of the whole person and not just an isolated medical condition.

Dr. Burick is raising the bar for patients, doctors, and the quality of health care. For more information visit www.burickcenter.com. ❖

Mikell Worley is the founder and president of Mikell's Treasures. She has spent more than 20 years designing and delivering self-improvement trainings, has had several cover stories in various magazines, and recently illustrated her first children's book. She is an advocate for women and children.



BURICK CENTER FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The first time a patient walks through the doors of the Burick Center for Health and Wellness, they are embarking on a new approach to medical care. Things happen faster at the center – same day or next day appointments are available when acute conditions arise, and appointments with subspecialty physicians are expedited. With these kinds of amenities, visits to the emergency room can often be avoided, along with the \$75 co-pay that goes with them.

Dr. Burick makes herself available to her patients in a way that many are not accustomed. She gives generous amounts of time to every visitor to the center, along with her direct telephone number and e-mail address. In short she knows her patients and allows them unlimited access to their medical records and test results.

With an annual fee of \$1750, which breaks down to \$5 a day, patients have found that peace of mind comes at a bargain price at the Burick Center for Health and Wellness.

