



# AED and StevensTHON invite CSH Pediatric Physiatrist Aura Shoval

BY OLIVIA SCHREIBER ON MARCH 2, 2018

This past Wednesday, Stevens Pre-Health Medical Honor Society Alpha Epsilon Delta (AED) and StevensTHON joined forces to welcome Dr. Aura Shoval, Pediatric Physiatrist at the Clifton Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH). The purpose of the event was to pique the interest of future healthcare providers with an introduction into the type of care that children within the Children's Miracle Network Hospital receive.

Alexis Cavallo, a representative from Clifton CSH, began with an explanation of the various treatments the hospital offers for an even wider range of diagnoses. Children with complex medical issues enter the hospital with "little hope" according to Cavallo, but oftentimes leave reaching their "highest potential," which is the main goal of the program.

After her brief introduction to the types of treatments and services CSH provides, Cavallo welcomed Dr. Aura Shoval to the front of the room to begin her presentation. Dr. Shoval — mindful that many of her students were interested in medicine — began with an overview of her specialty. Physiatry concerns itself with dysfunction of the bones, muscles, ligaments, and nervous system. Many of her treatment plans work to address her patients' spasticity or increased muscle tone that lead to many movement disorders. While functional goals are important, Dr. Shoval and her team work to improve patients' overall quality of life.

According to Dr. Shoval, there are just over 11,000 physiatrists in the United States; however, she is one of only 237 pediatric physiatrists in the country, making her role even more critical to the thousands of children who enter the Children's Miracle Network Hospital every week. "If I can convince even one of you to enter physiatry today, I've done my job," she joked, recognizing this talk as an opportunity to showcase her specialty to potential physicians.

Dr. Shoval listed the requirements to become a pediatric physiatrist — including four years of medical school and an additional six years of residency in rehabilitation, surgery, and pediatric-specific rehabilitation — and went on to name several of the common procedures she employs to alleviate pain and improve overall function. Physiatry employs the use of Botox, a powerful muscle relaxant that is used to improve musculoskeletal dysfunction and alleviate pain. Other practices include trigger point injections of steroid or lidocaine or, in more serious cases, the implantation

or an intrathecal baclofen pump. The pump is inserted into the abdominal cavity and a thin catheter is threaded up towards the neck within the spinal column. This method allows for specific delivery of Baclofen (another potent muscle relaxant) into the nervous system so that it might decrease spasticity related to spinal cord injuries or other neurological disorders.

After thoroughly illustrating what she does in her daily line of work, Dr. Shoval showed videos and images of several patients who had benefited tremendously under her care at CSH. One such patient was a young girl who now walks with little difficulty following a treatment plan including Botox injections, bracing, and hours of rehabilitation. “Walking is how children explore their world,” noted Dr. Shoval, a testament to how life-altering these treatments can be for children, both for their health and social life.

Kayla Pagnani, StevensTHON Program Director with CSH, gave brief remarks and thanked all volunteers and donors for their contributions to the cause. StevensTHON representatives were also there to provide more information about the dance marathon and fundraising techniques. “Dr. Shoval provided us with a perspective from the hospital that we do not normally hear about,” commented Seth Kirschner, StevensTHON Corporate Sponsorship Chair. “Not only was it an incredible learning experience, but her words of wisdom to incoming medical students were invaluable.”

StevensTHON is scheduled for April 27 beginning at 7 p.m. For those who are interested in joining the movement, visit <https://www.stevensthon.com/> for more information.

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