

The Record

FROM BOTTLE ROCKETS TO SPINAL SURGERY LINCOLN HIGH GRAD ALWAYS KNEW HE'D BE A DOCTOR

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Dr. Rayshad Oshtory

Growing up in Stockton, Rayshad Oshtory always knew he would be a surgeon.

He remembered as a child constantly walking by a bucket used as a doorstep in his family's garage. Inside the bucket was a human brain. It wasn't all that unusual if you knew that both Oshtory's parents, Drs. Meherji and Abha Oshtory, are neurologists who specialize in diseases of the brain, spinal cord, nerves and muscles.

"I would take it to school for show-and-tell," Oshtory said of that brain in the bucket, recalling his days at John R. Williams, Sierra Middle and Lincoln High schools. While at Lincoln High - where he graduated in 1994 - Oshtory participated in water polo and swimming, took photos for the yearbook and excelled in science and mathematics.

"He was a very smart fellow, too smart, very dedicated to studying, who has ended up very successful. He had a very high GPA and is a hard-working guy," recalled Dr. Fram Buhari, a longtime family friend and well-known Stockton cardiologist.

For 76 percent of the adults in San Joaquin County, formal education ends at high school. In 2008, just 15 percent had a four-year college degree, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

But Oshtory, 33, has spent more time in school after high school than he did before graduating. A constant tinkerer who constructed bottle rockets as a kid and "always had a knack for building things with my hands," Oshtory went off to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston to earn a degree in mechanical engineering in 1998.

His first year there, he won a trip to Germany to represent the United States for creating the nation's most innovative engineering project.

"Design has always been his forte. He's always been very good with mechanical designs," said his mother, Abha Oshtory.

He was the medical adviser on a mechanical engineering team that developed a knee rehabilitation system with monitors and sensors so the entire thing could be controlled by a computer. That successful innovation won the team a place at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

In light of those skills, Oshtory always knew deep down he was going into medicine.

"When all the kids visited a fire station and said they wanted to be firemen, Ray said he was going to be a doctor. It's part of his comfort zone. It just follows that he chose this path," his mother said.

After MIT, Oshtory returned to California to attend the David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles. By 2003, he had earned a medical degree and a master's degree in business administration.

Oshtory spent the next five years in residency, training as an orthopedic surgeon at Stanford University, followed by an academic fellowship honing his skills as a spine surgeon.

"I became interested in orthopedics because it was most like mechanical engineering," Oshtory said, noting that his passion is to develop biomedical device technology that improves the lives of spine patients.

After all his education, which for Oshtory will be a lifelong pursuit, he joined the well-established Post Street Orthopedics practice in San Francisco. He is affiliated with Sutter Health's California Pacific Medical Center and the Post Street Surgery Center, one of the nation's leading surgery centers.

He specializes in correcting spinal deformities using the most cutting-edge, minimally invasive surgical techniques. His other clinical interests include disc replacement, herniated discs, sciatica, and degenerative diseases of the back and neck.

In his short career, Oshtory has had peer-reviewed articles published in medical journals and has presented his research and findings at national physicians' conferences. And he has been a clinical instructor at Stanford's medical school.

Combining all his skills, Oshtory is a consultant to Intuitive Surgical, the Sunnyvale company behind the da Vinci Surgical System, a robotic- and computer-assisted platform for minimally invasive surgery. The company has yet to release a robot for spine surgery.

"They're in the really early stages right now," Oshtory said.

"I want to design devices that can potentially help hundreds of thousands. I'd like to focus on devices that can be used to increase efficiency, lower costs of treatment, decrease morbidity and improve safety. My goal is to improve the quality of health care while making it more cost effective," Oshtory said.

Said Buhari, a family friend: "He's going to be very successful wherever he goes."

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