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Dr. Patricia StandTal Clarke

◇ YEAR OF BIRTH / DEATH

b. 1953

◇ MEDICAL SCHOOL

University of Minnesota Medical School

◇ GEOGRAPHY

LOCATION Arizona

◇ CAREER PATH

Obstetrics and gynecology

General medicine: Family



◇ BIOGRAPHY

Patricia StandTal Clarke, M.D., who is part Eastern Band Cherokee (Wolf Clan), is a founding diplomat of the American Board of Holistic Medicine, an ordained Protestant minister, and a physician specializing in an integrative medical approach to treating patients. In her practice she interweaves prevention with treatment, working toward a full, happy, healthy life for individuals, families, and community.

Patricia Clarke is the daughter of Howard Clarke, an Appalachia-raised politician's son (Eastern Band Cherokee, Wolf Clan), and a Minnesota-raised banker's daughter (Norwegian). Upon graduation from high school, she was forbidden by her father to go to college to pursue her dream of being a physician, so instead she studied sociology. She then enrolled in seminary to "find myself," and was ordained as a protestant minister. While serving as pastor in several parishes, her family roots in Cherokee medicine became her focus. "The desire to merge my passion for humanitarian work with a love for medical science was channeled through my developing work with the United Nations," says Dr. Clarke, who was appointed consultant to the leadership during the UN Decade for Women beginning in 1975. She gained expertise in women's and children's health care in Europe, the Middle East, Canada, Mexico, North and East Africa, and Central America.

From 1981 to 1982 she took part in a seminar at Harvard University evaluating health care in Central America. Inspired by the confidence she saw in fellow women students enrolled in the medical school, Clarke decided to rethink her respectful adherence to her father's wishes and re-evaluate her career options.

In Chicago in 1982 she participated in a year's residency of clinical pastoral education at Northwestern Hospital, and the following year moved to Atlanta to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, preparing for the United Nation's Third World Conference of Women.

In 1984 Clarke took up pre-medical studies at Agnes Scott College, a southern women's college in Decatur, Georgia, volunteering one afternoon a week in the emergency clinics at Grady Hospital.

After her tenure ended with the United Nations, she worked as a house-parent in a residential facility for people with developmental disabilities, enrolled in an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) evening program, and resumed her pre-med course work, earning an EMT license in June 1987.

Eventually Clarke enrolled full-time in the University of California, Berkeley, spending the summer of 1988 volunteering as a student health clinician in a poor Nicaraguan hospital.

With a scholarship to attend University of Minnesota Medical School in September 1989, she took advantage of a chance to study gynecological surgery and do collaborative research on HIV-positive women. Following postdoctoral training in obstetrics and gynecology, anesthesiology, family practice, botanical medicine, and acupuncture she embarked upon an integrative, holistic approach to medicine.

"Family tradition, seminary, medical school, clinical research, indigenous traditional medicine training, and orthodox residency," she notes, "have tested, pruned, and with deepened roots, germinated the seeds of my childhood dream to be a healer: a physician-priest."

