

THE

# TV DOCTOR

by Tom O'Connor



## IN THE COURSE OF THEIR CAREERS, MOST PHYSICIANS TOUCH THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. BUT, FOR NANCY SNYDERMAN, M.D., THAT'S JUST A DAY AT THE OFFICE. SHE HELPS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE EACH WEEK.

A 1977 graduate of the UNMC College of Medicine, Dr. Snyderman is perhaps the most recognizable alum in UNMC history.

Three years ago, she joined NBC News as the chief medical editor. Each day, her face and words are seen and heard by millions, as she provides medical reports for "Today," "NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams," "Dateline NBC," MSNBC and MSNBC.com.

As if that's not enough, she just launched her own TV show, "Dr. Nancy," on MSNBC's new high definition network earlier this summer. And, she just finished her fifth book, "Diet Myths That Keep Us Fat."

Although her medical school years were the only time she spent in Nebraska, Dr. Snyderman will always hold a special place in her heart for UNMC.

"You would never imagine that a girl from Indiana would find her soul in Nebraska," she said. "If UNMC hadn't taken a chance on me, I wouldn't be where I am today. I owe everything to UNMC. It was the perfect set up for me. It gave me what I needed to go into pediatrics at Pittsburgh. It's why I continue to give and support Nebraska."

Since graduating, Dr. Snyderman has made a financial donation to UNMC every year. In 1996, she delivered her first commencement address at the UNMC College of Medicine hooding ceremony.

Growing up in Fort Wayne, Ind., Dr. Snyderman was a third-grader when she knew she was going to be a doctor. Both her father and grandfather were physicians, and she often accompanied her father on Sunday morning hospital rounds, where she would eat chocolate-covered graham crackers and

drink chocolate milk while she waited for him in the doctor's lounge.

After graduating from Indiana University in 1974, Dr. Snyderman went looking for a medical school. The search took her to Omaha, where her mother was born, and to UNMC.

Although it's been 35 years since she started medical school, she still has many fond memories.

"The first day I was so intimidated by the third- and fourth-year med students coming through the bookstore," she said. "There were 21 women in my class, which represented a big jump in female students. And, I remember students from Creighton and UNMC getting together for beers on the weekend."

Perhaps her most vivid memory of medical school took place in gross anatomy class.

"The professors wanted no nonsense in the cadaver lab," she said. "They instilled a tremendous sense of obligation to treat the bodies with the utmost respect. It set the tone for my entire medical school experience and made me have even more respect for the living."

She recalls an "extraordinary" urology rotation at Methodist Hospital, which allowed her to conduct patient exams and assist with surgical procedures. She also remembers being impressed with her first exposure to electronic medical records.

After completing medical school, Dr. Snyderman did a pediatrics residency at the University of Pittsburgh, where she decided to change direction and become a head and neck surgeon. As she put it, "I loved the anatomy of the head and neck."

She completed a second residency at Pittsburgh in ear, nose and throat surgery and

then, in 1983, joined the surgical staff at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. It was there that her TV career was launched.

Dr. Snyderman had conducted television interviews as a resident in Pittsburgh, so in Little Rock she approached KATV, the ABC affiliate, about being the station's medical reporter.

"The first segment I did was on head lice," she said. "I was proud that I negotiated with the station to be paid \$37.50 for each segment – up from my starting salary of \$25."

After five years in Arkansas, Dr. Snyderman moved to San Francisco in 1988 to join the staff at the University of California San Francisco. Her TV career took a leap forward as she became a medical correspondent for ABC News. Her medical reports appeared on "20/20," "Primetime" and "Good Morning America." She was a frequent substitute co-host on "Good Morning America."

Following 17 years with ABC, Dr. Snyderman moved east in 2005 to become vice president of consumer education for Johnson & Johnson. One year later, she landed her present position with NBC News.

Dr. Snyderman lives in Princeton, N.J., with her husband, Doug, and their three children, Kate, Rachel and Charlie. Between TV segments and books, she continues to practice medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Snyderman's love of television and medicine mesh well, she said. "Whether I'm at a patient's bedside or on television, I try to deliver the information plain and straight so everyone can understand it whether they have a high school degree or a Ph.D." ©