

PROFILE: Surgeon finds teaching, mission trips most rewarding

Kathy Oristaglio, For Progress & Innovation 12:03 a.m. ET Feb. 20, 2017



(Photo: HOBIE HILER)

Dr. Rene Loyola, a general and vascular surgeon, was recently named the Quality of Care Lifetime Achievement Award recipient by Treasure Coast Newspapers.

Loyola was nominated for his surgical skills, the compassion he's shown during his more than three decades caring for patients on the Treasure Coast, his dedication to the future of medicine, and his mission work.

Since 1983, Loyola has been affiliated with St. Lucie Medical Center.

Loyola is a clinical professor of surgery for Florida State University's College of Medicine, a position he has held since the school's inception. In his role as professor, Loyola primarily works one-on-one with students

for six months at a time.

"When I was a resident, my first love was teaching," he said.

Highly regarded for his medical mission work, Loyola has traveled with Light of the World Charities to areas lacking proper equipment and medical professionals, including Africa, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua and, most recently, Vietnam. Loyola said they take full operating rooms and surgical teams with them on location, performing as many as 30 surgeries in one week.

He also spends time training local physicians while on the mission trips that he's made the past dozen years.

"Aside from teaching, it's the most rewarding thing I do," said Loyola of his mission work. "People often ask me why I do it. When you go on a trip, these people have nothing, they are desperate. I'm not changing the world, but you can change the world for one person. In one week you can have a huge impact."

Loyola received his Bachelor of Science degree in biology and chemistry from Loyola University in New Orleans. He graduated from the University of Barcelona Medical School in 1975 and completed his surgical residency at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

He is board certified in general surgery and is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. In 2003, he was the recipient of the Physician Legacy Award at St. Lucie Medical Center.

When he heard that he was to receive the Quality of Care Lifetime Achievement Award, Loyola said, "I was surprised and overwhelmed. It makes me feel good to be recognized."

He describes what he does as a passion. "I could retire right now but I don't want to," Loyola said.

Loyola's philosophy of care is posted on the HealthGrades website, where he has a five-star rating: "My patients are humans first and patients second. I treat them with respect and consideration and take the time to listen to them and respond to their questions. No question in my mind is ever stupid or insignificant. I always try to place myself or a loved one of mine in my patient's place; that allows me to hopefully make the best decision on their behalf. I am warm, caring and honest and that translates to my patient care. I do bring a lot of my patient's problems home, although we are taught to distance yourself from your patient's suffering. It is not ideal but inevitable for me. When a person comes to you and entrusts you with their life and their health problems, it places a tremendous responsibility on you."



Dr. Rene M. Loyola meets with a member of his staff at his office in Port St. Lucie. (Photo: HOBIE HILER)

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