

## Women in Medicine Month



**Dr. Rachel Steckelberg, MD, MPH**

Dr. Rachel Steckelberg is a board-certified anesthesiologist specializing in regional anesthesia. She earned her MD from the Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine in 2012, completed her anesthesiology residency at UCLA, and went on to a fellowship in regional anesthesia at Stanford University. She now practices at Northside Hospital Atlanta and Northside Hospital Forsyth. Originally from Minnesota, she brings Midwestern warmth to Georgia's healthcare community. Dr. Steckelberg also currently serves as President of the Georgia Society of Anesthesiologists and is passionate about improving patient care and fostering professional collaboration.

### **1. What drew you to pursue fellowship training in regional anesthesia, and how has that shaped your current practice?**

As a resident, I very much enjoyed my regional rotation and wanted to supplement my anesthesia training with a regional fellowship to provide myself with the skill set and knowledge to add value to my future career as an 'expert regional anesthesiologist'. In my current practice, I am the Director of the Campus Wide Total Joint Program at Northside Hospital. My background training in regional anesthesia has supported me in this role by giving me the experience and understanding of how to lead a total joint program within a large hospital system. Expertise in enhanced recovery programs, better patient outcomes and experience(s), and operational and process improvement are all skills I acquired during my fellowship that have proved useful in my current practice.

**2. How has being a member of the Georgia Society of Anesthesiologists contributed to your professional development?**

I moved to Georgia for my first attending job after finishing residency and fellowship in California. As a new resident of Georgia, joining the GSA and actively participating as a member (and later on the Board of Directors) afforded me opportunities to make invaluable connections with other leaders within the anesthesia community in Georgia that I would not have otherwise been able to do as easily had I not been a member. Since moving to Georgia some years ago now, maintaining my involvement in the GSA has continued to allow me to stay knowledgeable about the current challenges anesthesiologists in Georgia face and set goals for the future of our specialty.

**3. What current issues or challenges in anesthesiology in Georgia do you think deserve more attention?**

I think the evolution of anesthesia delivery in the age of Artificial Intelligence cannot be ignored and I am interested to see how we will be incorporating predictive analysis and closed loop anesthesia delivery systems into our anesthesia practice in the future. I also think efforts to continue to advocate for physician-led anesthesia care and address scope of care continue to be warranted.

**4. Outside of your professional life, what activities or interests help you recharge?**

I love to travel, dabble in photography, Peloton, and I am an avid runner. I also enjoy spending time with my 2 girls (ages 1 and 3) and husband.

**5. What advice or encouragement would you give to the next generation of women entering anesthesiology?**

Reject the 'superwoman' myth. The expectation that women physicians must excel at a demanding job while also taking on a disproportionate share of domestic duties is a key driver of burnout. Focus on defining your own version of success rather than trying to do and be everything for everyone.

Build your tribe. Nurture your relationships, both inside and outside of medicine, that can offer honest feedback and encouragement. Having trusted people to lean on can help you recover and renew yourself after setbacks and also help boost your confidence when you have a 'win'.

Build resilience and let go of imposter syndrome. Anesthesiology is a stressful field, and you will face challenges and setbacks. Develop healthy coping mechanisms and don't let internal or external biases undermine your confidence.