

Field Notes: A Clinician's Journey

Satisfied in the Sunshine State



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Dr. John Marcus clocks out of work and into year-round vacation

For 30 years, Dr. John Marcus ran a solo OB/GYN practice in Ridgewood, New Jersey, a leafy bedroom community just outside New York City. He built his practice from scratch, earned the loyalty of generations of patients, and served in leadership roles from department director to chief of the local medical society.

By every conventional measure, the practice was a success. But Dr. Marcus found that there was one measure that came short: work-life balance.

"I gave my patients a 24/7, 365 guarantee, and it's pretty hard," he says.

"I go to new places, I make new friends, I do good work, I learn how they do it, and I consequently become even better."

The work meant days in the office followed by nights in the hospital followed by days in the office. It meant no separation between professional and personal life, because there was no personal life to separate. It meant expenses that kept running whether or not he was there to generate revenue. And it meant never experiencing what Dr. Marcus describes using a German word with no English equivalent: *Feierabend*, the deep, settled satisfaction you feel at the end of a hard day's work, knowing you can finally rest.

"A private, solo obstetrician never gets *Feierabend*," he says, "because it's always work. You're never off."



When an opportunity for change knocked, Dr. Marcus's wife heard it first. Liz Marcus, a labor nurse herself, spotted an Ob Hospitalist Group recruiting ad online. She made the pitch: Move to the house they'd already bought in Florida, work seven 24-hour shifts a month, draw a competitive salary with benefits, and stop running a practice that was consuming him.

"She drove this," Dr. Marcus says. "She said, 'Look at this. You can go to Florida, work seven days a month, the rest of the time you're off. Why are you working 24/7 doing what you're doing?'"

As any good husband would, he listened.

The Diplomat life

Today, Dr. Marcus serves as a Site Director and Regional Diplomat for OBHG, the nation's largest dedicated OB/GYN hospitalist provider. In the Regional Diplomat program, he travels to partner hospitals across Florida, leading medical teams and implementing best practices while OBHG covers travel and housing. It's a role that rewards clinical range and interpersonal skill in equal measure, and Dr. Marcus has found it suits him.

"I go to new places, I make new friends, I do good work, I learn how they do it, and I consequently become even better," he says.

Traveling between hospitals has given him a rare vantage point on clinical variation. He has seen firsthand how protocols, naming conventions, and standards of care differ from facility to facility, sometimes for good reason and sometimes not. As the "Diplomat" title suggests, the role demands tact.

"I have to be very diplomatic about how I bring best practices wherever I go," he says -- with the knowing emphasis of someone who has watched less diplomatic colleagues flame out.

That broad exposure has sharpened his clinical instincts. Dr. Marcus maintains a personal cesarean-section rate of 14%, well below the national average of 32.4%, a figure he attributes to confident fetal heart tracing interpretation and a willingness to trust the science when others reach for surgical intervention.

"There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that I have the best safety protocols, standards, and plans of care around, because I see all the best practices," he says.

It's showtime!

Dr. Marcus and Liz settled in Punta Gorda, on Florida's Gulf Coast between Fort Myers and Sarasota. Their home backs up to a mangrove preserve, which means permanent privacy, unobstructed sky, and what the couple calls "showtime" each evening: the moment the sun drops toward the horizon and lights up in gold and rose red over the trees.



"We celebrate it every night," says Dr. Marcus.

He's the first to point out contrasts with his former life. In New Jersey, going home meant shoveling snow, raking leaves, and waiting for the phone to ring. In Florida, clocking off a shift means something different entirely.

"When you clock off your job, you don't just go home," he says. "You clock into a vacation-style life."

He talks about Freedom Boat Club memberships, about exploring Jacksonville's parks and Miami's neighborhoods between assignments, about traveling with Liz and improving their home together. He talks about the colleagues he's met who share his love of movement and discovery. But what he returns to, again and again, is Feierabend: the permission to stop, to exhale, to know the day is actually over.

"You cannot put a price on the value of a life well-lived," Dr. Marcus says. "I believe we are paraphrasing Socrates."

Ob Hospitalist Group is hiring.

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