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## Meet Our Advocates: Dr. Jessica Lee



### **Where are you from?**

I'm from a suburb near Boston. Ethnically, I am Chinese and my parents immigrated from Taiwan.

### **What's your specialty or area of expertise?**

I'm an ob/gyn with a specialty in family planning. That means I have expertise in helping women with the full spectrum of contraceptive and pregnancy options.

I grew up like many Asian Americans in a household where reproductive and sexual health was not often discussed, since those are generally considered taboo topics. I can remember having so many questions about my body and health and no one I felt comfortable approaching with my questions. I was inspired to gain the knowledge and education to be a future resource for adolescents and women when they have similar questions to those I struggled with.

### **What story about one of your patients most sticks with you?**

There is a patient I saw last week who was 17 weeks along in her pregnancy. She desired to end her pregnancy after learning that her pregnancy had severe genetic problems and that if she were to carry her pregnancy to term, the child would not live. She was incredibly emotional during our visit, I could tell that although she was sure of her decision to proceed with an abortion, she was still very sad about the circumstances. She was of Catholic faith and very spiritual; I was able to coordinate a consultation with our hospital chaplain to help her through this difficult time. The next day, I performed her abortion, and the chaplain returned to bless the remains and provide her a rosary. I witnessed the blessing. One of the nurses called me over to her bedside as she was about to leave. I was surprised that the patient wanted to personally thank me for “making this really difficult time less difficult.” She asked for a hug and we held each other in tight embrace. By the time we let go of each other, I had tears in my eyes. Doing the work I do is not easy, but knowing that I can help patients during difficult and emotional times in their lives is very rewarding.

### **What current policy issue especially motivates you to be an advocate?**

Improving access to birth control options for all women. Maryland, where I work now, is a leader in setting policy initiatives that can improve women’s access, particularly with the newly enacted Maryland Contraceptive Equity Act. I wrote about this in a recent [op-ed in the Baltimore Sun](#).

KATHARINE MCCORMICK IS my social justice hero, although she was born over a century ago. Notably, she was the second female graduated from MIT and blazed the way for future female scholars in science and engineering. During my college education, I have fond memories of spending time studying in the dorm with her surname on MIT's campus. After she graduated, she went on to be a leader in the women's suffrage movement and in supporting research on contraceptives. She ended up funding most of the research for the development of the first contraceptive pill, and once the pill was approved, she continued to fund research to improve the pill. Using her brains, charisma, and philanthropy, Katharine McCormick was able to revolutionize women's contraception.

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*Every week, our Meet Our Advocates series showcases the talents and passion of one of our doctors and finds out, in their own words, what inspires them to be physician-advocates. Jessica Lee, MD, MPH, is a member of the Leadership Training Academy Class of 2018.*

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