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There's Something Special About Dr. Turner

[Barnes-Jewish Team](#)

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It was two weeks before her scheduled cesarean delivery and Sylvia Searleman, 32, was going into labor. This would be Searleman's third baby and her third C-section. Her obstetrician-gynecologist, [Jacqueline Turner, MD](#), rushed to the hospital to meet her. Before long, Searleman was in a crowded delivery room at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, numb from the waist down and being prepped for delivery. Duncan's birth, at 6:30 p.m., Jan. 12, represents Searleman's last child and one of Dr. Turner's last deliveries.

After about 30 years of delivering 10 to 15 babies a month, more than 5,800 deliveries, and countless hours on call, Dr. Turner has decided to retire from [obstetrics](#). Her ob/gyn partners, [Rosanna Gray-Swain, MD](#), and



[Bridget Rutledge, MD](#), will continue obstetrics in her place.

“As you get older, it gets harder to stay up all night and work all day, and do everything the way it should be done,” says Dr. Turner. “I really like my gynecology patients. My time will be focused on them now.”

Dr. Turner, 59, has been one of the best-known and busiest ob/gyns in St. Louis for many years. In her women’s health clinic, West End OB-GYN, she sees as many as 30 women a day and has about 6,500 patients. Her excellence and diligence have earned her three Outstanding Teaching Awards from resident physicians at Barnes-Jewish and the St. Louis American Foundation’s Excellence in Health Care Award. She was also nominated for the foundation’s 2017 Stellar Performer in Health Care Award.

But Dr. Turner is better known for how she treats her patients, who come from all sorts of socioeconomic backgrounds to receive the same kind of compassionate care. Dr. Turner’s patients say she is a listener; she tries to avoid telling her patients what health decisions they should make. Instead, she’s honest, giving her patients the facts, outlining possible consequences and encouraging them to make their own decisions.

“She made my wife and me feel comfortable regarding our pregnancy,” says Adam Searleman, MD, an intern at Barnes-Jewish and Sylvia Searleman’s husband. “She wanted to be sure the outcome was safe but didn’t push ideas on us. We appreciated that approach.”

Dr. Turner’s approach with patients is simple: She tries to treat them the way she wants to be treated, something she learned from her father.

Like father, like daughter

Dr. Turner says her parents have had the biggest influence on her life. Her father was a pharmacist who owned a drug store in Wichita, Kan., Dr. Turner’s hometown, and her mother was a preschool teacher.

“His business was in the middle of our community, and he knew everybody and he had relationships with all of his clients. He worked 12 hours a day, six days a week. He loved his career and loved caring for people.”

Like her father, Dr. Turner loves her career, works hard and builds relationships with her patients. After she graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and completed her residency at Harlem Hospital in New York, she moved to St. Louis, where she started her first private practice in 1995. In 2000, she founded West End OB-GYN, which is a part of [BJC Medical Group](#). She’s now a BJC Medical Group physician at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and a clinical instructor at Washington University School of Medicine, where she’s earned a reputation for being calm, especially in the operating room.

Dr. Turner’s demeanor is relaxed and still, an attitude that helps her patients feel the same way. The soft tone of her voice expresses patience and concern, causing the women she treats to feel important. Many of them say this behavior is consistent, refreshing and a little unexpected.

“She has a gift,” says Diona Barragan, 25, one of Dr. Turner’s patients. “I had preeclampsia during my first pregnancy, so I was nervous. But Dr. Turner was so calm I almost forgot she was a doctor. She’s like a second mom. No one can replace her, and I want to thank her for such a great experience.”

Career decisions

The first time Dr. Turner saw a gynecologist, she was 16.

“He was this old dude, and it was the worst interaction. He wasn’t mean, but he really didn’t talk to me. Afterwards I felt like, wow, I could do this much better than this guy. We need to have women doing this.”

Many years later, word began to spread about the calm and caring physician at West End OB-GYN, and the list of patients grew. During the day, Dr. Turner’s office was filled with women; at night, she often delivered babies.

Finally, Dr. Turner knew it was time to retire from obstetrics. But not before Adam and Sylvia Searleman’s baby, Duncan, was delivered. Dr. Turner had promised Searleman, who was worried about the birth given difficulties she’d had with her first delivery, that she would be with her.

“She’s brilliant and elegant,” says Searleman. “I’m grateful that Dr. Turner was able to deliver my baby.”

By limiting her practice to [gynecology](#), Dr. Turner will have more time to spend with her family. Most Sundays, she’s in her kitchen showing her two adult sons how to be better cooks. Dr. Turner also cares for her mother, who lives with her. She’s looking forward to having more time for yoga and for her two book clubs. And, when she and her husband can get away, they enjoy traveling together.

“Obstetrics is a unique part of medicine because it’s happy—it’s a good thing, not a disease,” she says. “The baby comes out, everyone’s excited, and that’s really fun. I’ll miss that a lot.”

Even though Dr. Turner is saying goodbye to obstetrics, she is leaving a legacy behind—a community of women who are grateful for her compassion and care. For years these women have been saying, “There’s something special about Dr. Turner.” They aren’t wrong.

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About the Author ([Author Profile](#))

Barnes-Jewish Hospital at Washington University Medical Center is the largest hospital in Missouri and the largest private employer in the St. Louis region. An affiliated teaching hospital of Washington University School of Medicine, Barnes-Jewish Hospital has a 1,800 member medical staff with many who are recognized as "Best Doctors in America." They are supported by residents, interns and fellows, in addition to nurses, technicians and other health-care professionals.

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