

Meet the Doctors

Monica Pierson, MD,FAAP -Medical Director

Dr.Pierson's essence is captured in her personal belief that her mission in life is to "encourage health in herself and others". From the tender age of 5 she knew that she wanted to be a doctor. Having parents who practiced and encouraged exercise and healthy nutrition made an early impression."Now,when I am down-hill skiing, or hiking in the Smokey Mountains with myfather(in his mid-70's) or ice-skating and clearing land with my 80 year old mother,the benefits of those healthy habits are even more clear!"

Understanding Obesity

After medical school, Dr. Pierson's delight-in-youngsters lead her to Kansas University Medical Center where she completed a residency in Pediatrics in 1988. During her 11 years of practice as a board certified pediatrician, the upward trend of her young patient's weight began to be of concern. She was seeing children as young as 10 years old carrying 50 pounds (or more)of excess weight. In 1999, after much study and planning, she left the practice of general pediatrics and opened the first privately run weight-loss clinic for children in the Midwest. As a pioneer in childhood obesity treatment, Dr.Pierson gained experience working with families, helping them to change and become healthy as a unit. She also became involved in obesity research with adults through the University of Kansas, and thus gained experience treating adults with the disease of obesity.

ExperienceGained

In 2002, after further study, Dr. Pierson passed the oral and written board exams of the American Board of Bariatric Medicine (ABBM) and in 2005 became a Diplomat of the ABBM. Search: Pierson, Monica

- In 2008 she was invited to be on the Board of Directors of the ABBM to support childhood obesity education for other physicians seeking board certification in the practice of bariatric medicine.

- Dr. Pierson has been the Principal Investigator on more than 130 clinical trials for new medications to treat obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and other co-morbidities of obesity.

- In 2006, Dr. Pierson was appointed to serve on Governor Sebelius' Council on Fitness. Goals of this council focus on health for Kansans, promoting increased activity and healthy diets.

A Personal Perspective

In her "spare time", Dr. Pierson enjoys time with her family, dogs, cat and African Grey parrot, Dolli. She speaks Spanish, loves ball room dancing, weight lifting, biking , scuba diving and almost anything outdoors. Her newest interest is kayaking KS and MO lakes and rivers.

"As an overweight teen and a weight challenged adult, I can honestly say that keeping my own weight healthy is the most difficult & ongoing challenge I have ever faced" says Pierson. She teaches that weight management is a journey, not a destination. "But I have learned to love the journey! And working with others, whether young or old, helping them to let go of perfectionism and the belief that obesity is a character defect,helping them learn how weight management skills are more important than will power; it feels like I have come full circle and am doing what I was meant to do!"

Claudia Darnell, EdD -President, CEO

Darnell, EdD is co-owner of Weight Management Medical Center with Monica Pierson, MD. Since 1999, she has worked collaboratively with Dr. Pierson teaching healthy lifestyle skills to patients of all ages. Prior to joining WMMC, Dr. Darnell worked in public education for 17 years as both a high school teacher and principal. She worked tirelessly to support teaching style changes that promoted better student learning. Dr. Darnell took a leave of absence from public education in 1998 to complete her dissertation. It was during this time she was introduced to Dr. Pierson. In 1999 they brought their skills together to work collaboratively with overweight patients; she's never looked back. The skill sets developed for teaching along with the management responsibilities of a high school principal are used in some way each day when working with patients and operating their business.

When not at the office Dr. Darnell likes to stay busy with anything that allows her to be outdoors. She enjoys hiking with her husband and friends and playing golf. Just like many patients she has had to create a plan to incorporate daily exercise. "When I first started in this business I realized that I couldn't ask patients to exercise regularly if I wasn't willing to do the same thing. I moved exercise to one of my top daily priorities. When the alarm goes off at 4:30 a.m. and it's cold or rainy I would rather stay home but once I'm up and about, and especially when I'm done, I feel great!"

If you ask her what she is most proud about in her life the answer is "...helping people." She did this in public education and continues this mission with each patient at WMMC.