

HEARTFELT SUCCESS

It was a crazy, hectic day. Just like all the others. People living. People dying. And there was much to do. There was blood to be drawn, labs to check, internal jugular lines to sink deep within a vein.

So begins the introduction to **Kathy Magliato**'s memoir, "Heart Matters: A Memoir of a Female Heart Surgeon" (Penguin Random House, 2011).

While crazy, hectic days are nothing unusual within the medical profession, what Magliato (Fel '98) has accomplished throughout her days is inspiring.

The cardiothoracic surgeon, based in Santa Monica, California, and affiliated with multiple hospitals, is in an exclusive group of surgeons trained to perform heart transplants. She also holds an MBA and is working on a patented medical device that could help provide early detection of heart problems, which, she stresses, could save lives. "Heart disease is the number one killer for men and women in the world," says Magliato. "Yet, it is 80% preventable."

The novel device is like a blood pressure cuff that performs as a noninvasive, nonimaging tool for measuring and tracking blood vessel health. By revealing early warning signs of heart disease, Magliato believes "this technology potentially opens a window into your vascular health at a time where we can intervene."

Her memoir—which sheds light on how heart disease kills more women on average than all types of cancer combined—was a New York Times bestseller, both in print and as an ebook. More than 10 years since it was first published, she says she still receives near-daily letters and email reactions, her story having "a far greater impact than I could ever imagine," she says. It became the inspiration for the 2016 NBC medical drama "Heartbeat."

She says the book, like her specialty, was a labor of love; and Magliato, married to Nicholas Nissen (Fel '98), dedicated it to her two sons—"whose hugs and kisses at the end of each challenging day heal my heart," she writes. —*Kari Villanueva*



Magliato

GOING HIS OWN WAY

Ask **Ray Funahashi** (MD '20) about his medical career, and he'll point out: "I'm as nontraditional as they come."

Instead of starting a residency after medical school, he learned to code. And, before beginning his postdoc, he became a drug discovery manager at Pitt's Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship partner, sciVelo.

He recently served as a postdoctoral associate at Pitt's School of Medicine and also mentored students on entrepreneurial opportunities—a sort of "innovation fellowship," as he calls it.

The mentoring was much needed, says Funahashi, because many students "have all of these ideas. [They] see and understand the problem space—but to execute some sort of solution is prohibitively difficult" because they can't find people with complementary skills in tech or business.

Seeing the potential of tech innovation to advance medicine compelled him to reevaluate his own career path.

His reevaluation took him to Gesund.ai—a Boston-based startup, where he's heading clinical affairs. For companies or academics developing medical algorithms, Gesund helps ensure their artificial intelligence is safe and effective. In February 2022, the new company received \$2 million in seed funding led by the venture capital firm 500 Global.

Funahashi says his interest in medical research was shaped in part by his family history. Helping care for his grandmother, who suffered a brain injury when he was younger, made him curious about stem cells, which led him to research positions at the National Institutes of Health and Columbia University before medical school. Funahashi says he doesn't reflect on (traditional) paths not taken.

"For health sciences students who are thinking about trying to make a difference that's outside of a traditional clinical path—there are many ways to do it." —*Rachel Mennies*



Funahashi