



**Sarina Brar Pai, DO, on her wedding day wearing a North Indian-style embroidered lehenga, her hands decorated with henna and her eyes and head adorned with bindis and jewels capturing the essence of a traditional Indian bride.**

Sarina Brar Pai, DO, knows whether a woman comes for a screening mammogram, breast ultrasound or biopsy, she's likely to feel some fear and trepidation. Dr. Pai has made it her mission to assure her patients that along with receiving excellent medical attention, they will be enveloped in caring arms.

"It just takes a few seconds to put a patient at ease, to empathize and reassure her," says Dr. Pai, a breast radiologist and clinical codirector of the Vasek and Anna Maria Polak Breast Diagnostic Center. "We as radiologists have the first interaction with the patient and may be the first to signal a potential problem," she says. "As clinicians, our attitudes influence how our patients react. My message to patients is: 'You'll be taken care of, and you'll get through this.'"

Dr. Pai, who joined Torrance Memorial Medical Center in 2011, wanted to be a doctor since she was a child. As the daughter of highly educated immigrants from India, she was used to seeing women in strong roles and had physicians as role models among her extended family. She chose to earn a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree, which emphasizes whole-body medicine and preventive care.

In medical school, she fell in love with imaging because she saw it as cutting-edge medicine. She also liked the collaborative nature of the discipline. "You're a doctor's doctor," she says. "Physicians come to you for consultations, and you diagnose patients alongside them," she says.

Another factor attracted her to radiology: The field was dominated by males, and she believed it would benefit from more female representation. "Sometimes older women are especially excited to have a young female doctor because that hasn't been the norm for them," she says.

Dr. Pai stresses both the female and male physicians at the Breast Diagnostic Center show sensitivity to their patients because it's embedded in the center's culture. As clinical codirector with Julie P. Sim, MD, she is proud that the Breast Diagnostic Center provides "the whole package," offering some of the most

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YPPA Play-by-Play

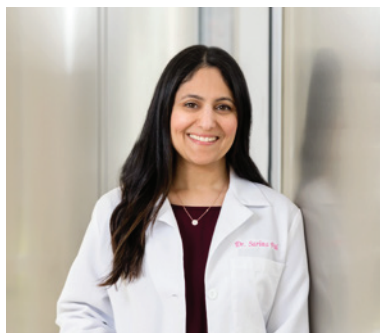
# THE ART OF MEDICINE

**Sarina Brar Pai, DO**

WRITTEN BY NANCY SOKOLER STEINER  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JENNIFER CARRILLO

accurate and least invasive screening and diagnostic procedures available.

“Our technology and doctors are all grade A. They are all experts in breast imaging and provide expert reads,” she says. “And we have the best technicians who provide excellent images.”



In addition, Nurse Navigators guide women who need further testing or have been diagnosed with breast cancer through the process, making appointments and providing a road map for care. “It can be overwhelming and paralyzing to figure out what to do next,” says Dr. Pai. “We want to minimize that burden.”

Dr. Pai joined the Young Physicians and Professionals Alliance (YPPA) at the invitation of radiologist Heidi Hoffman, MD, one of the group’s cofounders. “I wanted to support the community and Torrance Memorial Medical Center,” she said. “YPPA has helped fund wonderful projects such as the renovation of the maternity, neonatal ICU and pediatric departments as well as purchasing Nintendo Fun Stations for the Pediatric & Young Adult Pavilion.”

In addition to raising funds, YPPA hosts dynamic social gatherings and offers opportunities for personal and professional networking. Dr. Pai has spoken at the YPPA-sponsored annual Be Your Own Hero breast cancer awareness event, where participants learn about diagnostic and preventive care at the Breast Diagnostic Center. They hear inspiring stories about treatment and comprehensive care provided at the Hunt Cancer Institute. Dr. Pai loves the idea of empowering physicians and community members to

support the hospital through YPPA.

Dr. Pai says a major priority for the Breast Diagnostic Center is expanding outreach and access to communities that have been less likely to seek breast cancer prevention and early detection services. She notes women who regularly have annual mammograms are less likely to die of breast cancer. The Breast Diagnostic Center has locations in Torrance, Carson, Manhattan Beach and Rolling Hills Estates to make screening convenient.

Dr. Pai is alarmed by health disparities among African Americans. While the breast cancer death rate among White women has fallen 43% since 1980, it has only dropped by 23% for Black women. “That figure should set off alarm bells” among physicians, she says. She believes radiologists can lead the charge to increase awareness among physicians about the need to assess breast cancer risk among their Black patients. She and Dr. Sim developed a flyer for distribution to patients and referring physicians to raise awareness of this issue. They also speak to doctors’ groups.

The Breast Diagnostic Center screens between 32,000 to 35,000 women annually, and Dr. Pai wants to grow that number. The center is open on Saturday mornings and has piloted weekday evening appointments from 6 to 8 p.m. to make access easier for women unable to take time off during the workday.

“We’re always looking at what’s next, what’s best for the patient and how we can serve the community,” she says.

When not at Torrance Memorial Medical Center, Dr. Pai enjoys spending time with her husband, an interventional radiologist, and their 12-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter. As a lover of art (she says if she weren’t a doctor, she’d probably be an art historian or museum curator), she enjoys traveling and introducing her children to art and history. The family traveled to England and France in 2019, where the children learned “history galore” and made lifetime memories.

Her patients and colleagues appreciate how Dr. Pai has made breast diagnosis and patient care into an art.

**Avni Pai (age 10), Sarina Brar Pai, DO, Nirvaan Pai (age 12) and Rajiv Pai, MD enjoy traveling and spending time together.**

