

2020-2021 Dedication: Dr. Craig Israelite, MD



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It is with the utmost honor and privilege that we dedicate this year's edition of the University of Pennsylvania's Orthopaedic Journal to Dr. Craig Israelite MD, co-director of the Knee Replacement Service, former program director, and Associate Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery. Dr. Israelite's journey within the field of orthopaedics first began when he sustained an ankle fracture while playing tennis the day prior to his orthopaedic rotation. Nevertheless, Dr. Israelite strode in on his first day in crutches, smiling and joking about what had happened the day prior. His jovial personality, his ability to bond with the residents in addition to his passion for surgery, allowed him to fall in love with the field.

He recalled that training during his era was quite different than what it is today. He trained with only two other residents in his year. They labored day and night working on each individual service for three months. As Dr. Israelite was completing his 4th year of residency, Dr. Arnold Berman, his mentor and the chairman of Hahnemann University Hospital at the time surprised Dr. Israelite by offering him a faculty position. Instead of proceeding with the sports fellowship at Penn that had been arranged, he signed on for the position. As a rising faculty member, he found himself doing a wide variety of cases, sometimes performing arthroscopies, arthroplasty, and orthopedic trauma cases in a single day.

Dr. Israelite's transition to the University Hospital of Pennsylvania began in 2002 when he was recruited by Dr.

Richard Lachman former chair of the department. His close friend, Dr. Brian Sennett, was instrumental in convincing him to take the leap from Hahnemann to Penn. Both still share a close relationship to this day. While at Penn, Dr. Israelite's ascent to program director began shortly thereafter. At that time, the chairman was the de facto program director. Dr. Israelite attended the monthly resident meetings, developing close relationships with the residents. When Dr. Levin became chairman, he recognized Dr. Israelite's passion for resident education and training, thereby appointing him as the department's first program director.

Dr. Israelite was challenged with the daunting task of building the residency program and reinforcing the infrastructure to allow residents to get top-notch training. His philosophy of taking residents' input and being both fair and balanced when making decisions for the betterment of the program made him a beloved program director. During his early tenure, Dr. Israelite recalled there being less paperwork and milestones. Now the program has grown so much with almost twice as many faculty, but Dr. Israelite ascribes his ability to keep things running smoothly by listening closely to the residents and meeting consistently whether it be late at night or on the weekend. The most rewarding part of the job has been the relationships he has developed and maintained with former residents who he continues to keep close contact with to this day.

Over the years, Dr. Israelite's practice has evolved. Initially, he found himself operating heavily on trauma cases at Hahnemann during his first years of practice due to not having a traumatologist on staff at the time. His first case as an attending was posterior instrumentation and fusion for treatment of an L3 burst fracture. He also recalls the transition of knowing everyone at Hahnemann from the orderlies to the attendings to starting over in 2002 at Penn and building his arthroplasty practice and leading the way as the department's first program director. The three surgeries he misses the most from his early years are tibial plateau ORIF, both bones ORIF, and ACL reconstructions. What Dr. Israelite is most looking forward to in the upcoming years includes the growth of his practice including advances in arthroplasty with navigation and robotics. Upon asking Dr. Israelite what he is most proud of in his career, without hesitation, he states that his family and three wonderful children are his pride and joy. Dr. Israelite gives credit to his wife and recounts that the single best thing is "having your family appreciate your hard work".

Thank you Dr. Israelite for everything you have done for the department, residents, and field of Orthopaedic surgery. We are truly lucky to have such a dedicated, kindhearted, and joyous soul in our department and we look forward to your continued teachings and contributions.