



Office of Faculty Development

Pathology & Immunology

Dr. Kathleen Byrnes grew up in St. Louis. Her father, Dr. Christopher Byrnes, was a preeminent systems science engineer and Dean of Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis. Her mother, Cathy Byrnes, was a stay-at-home mom and later pursued an MBA becoming an accountant. While growing up, her family traveled with her father for his various appointments and sabbaticals. These trips abroad included visiting numerous countries in Europe and spending summers in Stockholm. These times abroad instilled in Kathleen her love of travel and experiencing new cultures.

As a child, Kathleen admired her father's passion for learning and mathematics and desire to explain and define how things worked. This zeal for knowledge inspired Kathleen to pursue a career in academics. In addition, she grew up hearing numerous stories of her great-grandfather, Dr. Earl Morris, who was a family practice doctor in rural Ohio during the Great Depression. He had a great interest in pathology and maintained a small notebook with colored drawings of histologic findings he studied in medical school and in his practice. Hearing stories about her great-grandfather motivated Kathleen to pursue a career as an academic physician, allowing her to combine her love for learning and passion for helping patients.

At Washington University in St. Louis, Kathleen double majored in Biomedical Engineering and Chemical Engineering. Her interest in being able to define how things work and problem solve were inspired by her father's engineering background. However, she also wanted a more direct role in helping patients leading her to pursue a medical degree at Tulane University. While in medical school, Kathleen rotated with Dr. Edwin Beckman, a local pathologist, as well as with a pathologist at Tulane, Dr. Bryan Crawford. The spatial and visual learning aspects of pathology intrigued her to explore the specialty. She took an additional year during medical school to perform research on the role of microRNAs in a variety of liver carcinomas, including hepatocellular carcinoma and cholangiocarcinoma, in Dr. Tong Wu's lab. These experiences inspired her to pursue pathology as her career in medicine.

Kathleen is inspired by the challenge of combining clinical information and histologic patterns into a diagnosis. When combined with the team-based effort to ensure proper patient care, anatomic pathology represents all of Kathleen's interests coalesced into one area of academic study. She chose WashU for residency because of the sense of community, variety of cases, and historical role of the department in the field of pathology. After completing her residency and chief residency, she was the John Yardley fellow in GI/liver pathology at Johns Hopkins. She returned to WashU as an assistant professor in the section of GI/liver pathology because of the WashU community and her love of St. Louis.

Outside of work, Kathleen loves to knit, read mystery novels, cook, and bake. In particular, she loves cooking Italian recipes she learned in the kitchen with her father. She is a supporter of the local cultural institutions in St. Louis from the art museum to the botanical gardens. She is also passionate about traveling and exploring the different state parks in Missouri. Kathleen lives with her partner, David Hollander a practicing attorney, and their two dogs, Winston and Sammie. They frequently take walks with the dogs in Forest Park and enjoy take out from St. Louis's amazing restaurants.

