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Seminole doctor authors third book on medical procedures

By BOB McCLURE

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SEMINOLE – Vu Nguyen of Seminole vividly remembers the day when he and his family escaped the confusion 24 hours before Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese army.

It was 1975 and Nguyen was 4. His father, a member of the South Vietnamese navy, and other family members were lucky enough to escape on one of the last U.S. ships to leave.

For Vu, it was the beginning of a new life that has since transcended into a medical career and now a writing career.

In a couple of months, his third book will be published by Frederick, Md.-based Publish America.

Unlike his first two books, which were geared toward members of the medical profession, "Medical Perceptions: Fact or Fiction?" is targeted toward the general public. All three works deal with medical errors and how to avoid them.

"This one is big on cardiac errors and chest pain," said Nguyen, a 37-year-old Pinellas County emergency room physician. "The biggest chapter is on the misconception about cardiac errors. If you go to a hospital with chest pains and just because the test results are normal it doesn't mean you don't have a problem. The book also explains the limitations of medicine."

The book will be available through Amazon.com, along with Books-A-Million and Borders retail stores.

Writing is nothing new for Nguyen. He has written 99 articles for a variety of medical publications, including Consultant Medical Journal, Patient Care and Core Content Review of Family Medicine.

"I started writing when I finished my residency and was in clinical practice in Tallahassee," said Nguyen, who is board certified in family medicine and emergency medicine. "A colleague of mine was writing a monthly column in a medical publication and I eventually co-authored the column with him. That's what inspired me and got me interested in authoring books. When I write, it's more a review and discussion as opposed to writing about the latest hip surgery."

Unlike many other aspiring authors, Nguyen didn't have any problems finding a publisher for his first book "Learning From Medical Errors: Legal Issues."

"It took me about a month to find a medical publisher," he said. "The hard area for new authors is fiction or when you're writing a novel," Nguyen said. "Everybody has a novel out there."

He corresponded by e-mail with two well-established medical authors, Frank Edwards and Judith Tintinalli, who gave their recommendations.

Not long thereafter he had a deal with Radcliffe Publishing Ltd., in Abingdon, England, which also published his second book, "Learning From Medical Errors: Clinical Problems."

When he decided to write a book for the general public, he sought a traditional publisher in the U.S., which led him to Publish America.

Following Nguyen's migration from Vietnam to the U.S., he and his family landed in Fort Indian Gap, Pa., where they stayed for a year before relocating to York, Pa.



Photo by BOB McCLURE

Dr. Vu Nguyen of Seminole displays his first two books and a pair of gold medals he won in Tae Kwon Do at this year's Sunshine State Games.

Eight years later, when Vu was 12, his family wanted to live in a warmer climate and moved to Tampa. He later graduated from Hillsborough High School, earned a bachelor's degree in science and engineering from the University of South Florida and graduated from USF Medical School in 1996.

He served his residency for three years at Bayfront Medical Center before working five years in Tallahassee at what is now Capital Regional Medical Center.

Nguyen, who is married with three small children, is also skilled in martial arts. His talent was evident earlier this summer when he won gold medals in his age division at the Sunshine State Games in Tae Kwon Do form and sparring.

Additionally, he volunteers at a free clinic in Clearwater and lectures throughout Pinellas County on how to prevent medical errors.

His volunteer time is so large that he was recently named Volunteer Preceptor of the Year by the Florida Academy of Family Physicians.

And what lies ahead for Nguyen?

"I just want to keep doing the things that I've been doing," he said. "I have other ideas on books. They're other medical book ideas on clinical medicine. I want to work on those things and just enjoy watching my kids growing up."

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