Getting to Know the HPS

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When someone asks what a health physicist is, how do you answer?
A health physicist is a person who takes care of human health, but different from a physician, who sometimes cures people using radiation, a health physicist helps people avoid becoming sick because of radiation.

Where do you work and what is your job title?
I am a professor and researcher. I teach in the radiological technologist program at the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Santa Catarina in Brazil.

How does your job involve health physics?
I teach several courses in the radiological technologist program, like radiation production and how the computerized tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and nuclear medicine equipment work, and I do research in x-ray production and radiation protection.

How did you get started in health physics?
I was invited to teach in the radiological technologist program in 1998 and got so involved that I decided to get a PhD in health physics.

What do you enjoy most about being a health physicist?
It is an amazing field because we need to know a little of medicine, management, mathematics, nursing, and physics, of course.

What has been most exciting about your health physics career?
The research I do—I found out there are so many things to conduct research about, and I am trying to contribute in the field.

Who in the field has most inspired you? In what way?
When I was an undergraduate, I desired to be a nuclear engineer and work at Angra dos Reis Nuclear Plant (Brazil). During my studies, I had a professor, a physicist who had his own radiation protection and dosimetry company, here in Brazil. That is what made me curious about the field, and then after six years I started working in health physics as a teacher.

What advice do you have for students entering the field of health physics?
Well, the first thing is always study—study a lot—and be curious. Always ask why? How much? How I can measure it? How I can reduce dose?

When did you join the Health Physics Society (HPS)?
Well, I think it was almost 10 years ago, when I began my PhD in physics at Federal University of Santa Catarina.

In what ways have you been involved with the HPS?
Well, in the beginning, I just read the Journal and the newsletter. Now, since 2010, I have been attending the annual meetings and giving oral presentations to show some of my research and gain much more knowledge. I am going to my third annual meeting this year.

What has been the greatest benefit of HPS membership for you?
The access to information and knowledge on the HPS website and at the meetings.

What do you do when you aren't doing health physics?
Well, I get rest and leisure time, when I spend time with my wife and two little daughters. We go shopping, see movies, go on bicycle rides in the park.

Is there anything else you think HPS members would enjoy learning about you?
Being multidisciplinary is something very important nowadays. I am an electrical engineer, with a master's degree in digital image processing and a physics doctorate in radiation production. These three areas make me so comfortable teaching about equipment—in particular, CT, MRI, single photon emission computed tomography, and positron emission tomography—because I can connect electronics with x-ray production and also electronics and math with image production. My students love it because I can give them a good class with simple language and all the connected processes. ■