



Dr Rohan Poulter and his wife Dr Sophie Poulter working at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital.

PHOTOS: WARREN LYNAM

## DOCTORS IN LOVE

THIS WEEK'S RELATIONSHIP INFLUENCERS ARE DOCTOR ROHAN POULTER AND DR SOPHIE POULTER, WHO BOTH HAVE DEMANDING CAREERS IN MEDICINE BUT HAVE BUILT A LIFE TOGETHER WITH THEIR THREE BOYS BUILT ON MUTUAL RESPECT

Joanne Wilson

**Y**ou'll love this interview with Doctors Sophie and Rohan Poulter. I laughed, became teary and smiled throughout their story, told with humility. They're making a massive contribution to the Sunshine Coast and yet challenged by competing priorities and a similar juggling act performed by many of us. I couldn't get enough of this awesome couple who are the perfect inspiring and dynamic couple to conclude my "Relationship Influencers" series.

**Sophie, due to your high-profile role specialising in endocrinology and obstetric medicine; Rohan as clinical director of cardiology at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, you're considered highly regarded relationship influencers. You've both studied and worked around Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada. How did you come to live on our glorious Sunshine Coast?**

**R:** I started my medical career on the coast as an intern at Nambour Hospital. At the time, I had joked I could see myself coming back to work as a physician and live on a 40-foot boat at Mooloolaba. I hadn't even put marriage and family on the horizon then. Fast forward through all the training years after and the opportunity to return came up with the new cardiac catheter laboratory service at Nambour Hospital in

2012 and the advertisement for an interventional cardiologist. Sophie and I were married by then with our first son and another was on the way. We could see the coast as an opportunity for Sophie's specialty interests as well and be a fabulous place to raise little people.

**S:** Having spent many holidays on the coast while I was growing up, it had a wonderful feeling of family and peace for me. It provided almost a conditioned response for relaxation when I first heard waves. It has been such a great move for us. I can't think of a better place to live and bring up our children.

**How did you meet and how long have you been married?**

**R:** I was aware of Sophie at med school, though we never met. Our career paths had taken us separately away from Brisbane but coincidentally we came back around the same time to the Royal Brisbane Hospital. We met through mutual friends and apparently I piqued Sophie's interest with my travel stories. Her brother then moved next door to me and brokering that introduction became Sophie's excuse to get to know me better. We've been married now seven years.

**S:** I met Rohan 10 years ago at a friend's going-away celebration and thought he was fascinating. He had travelled widely and had some great stories to tell! That and some pretty amazing blue eyes. In a twist of fate,

my brother bought the house next door to his and unwittingly abetted my dating plans.

**What motivated you both to enter into the demanding field of medicine?**

**R:** I'd always enjoyed analytics and problem solving but wanted a job that involved people more than a desk. Medicine offered that, with the bonus of being able to help people in a very individual meaningful way. I wanted the opportunity to travel as I'd never left Australia growing up and medicine was a good career to use overseas.

**S:** I agree, although my interest began when I was a teenager over dinner table discussions with my medical family. The possibilities and satisfaction that this job had to offer became clear when I started to practise. It is such an incredible job where it is a privilege to be invited into people's lives, to make that connection and to try to help them. Each person has an individual puzzle to be figured out and I feel like we can make a difference in most. This is often most tangible in my work as an obstetric physician where you can change the course of a pregnancy and hopefully see a family at the end of it.

**As influencers, who have been your mentors or people you admire?**

**R:** My parents moulded me into the person I am. Undoubtedly the person I've seen as mentor is my former supervising consultant from my training in Canada, Dr

David Wood. Not only was he, and still is, working in a world class centre that does cutting edge, world-first heart procedures, he is also happily married with his wife and has four daughters he's devoted to. Dave taught me so much about cardiac procedures, but also how to lead a team at work and be a great dad at home.

**S:** There are so many people including my father, a wonderful doctor and person. I spent many of my formative years completely convinced he knew everything and I very much wanted to be like him. My mother is an incredibly strong woman who invested herself completely in her children and was the glue that held our family together.

Rohan's parents still automatically hold hands whenever they are in reaching distance, even after 45 years of marriage.

**As the proud parents of three young boys under six you surely have days when you're not the best versions of yourselves? How do you overcome those sub-standard ones to fulfil your hectic roles?**

**R:** We rely heavily on understanding each other's work commitments, which sometimes means those days are unavoidable. The other needs to step in to take the load where they can. Simply recognising that and appreciating the support and paying back that time and commitment is important. One