

# ASK THE EXPERT: EVA DUBIN GIVES BACK

*Founder of The Dubin Breast Center at The Mount Sinai Medical Center, Dubin fights to treat others the way she wanted to be treated.*

BY LISA IANNUCCI  
CTW FEATURES

Her doctor simply told her, “You have breast cancer and I think you need a mastectomy,” and hung up. Eva Dubin, once a model with an illustrious career, a Miss Universe finalist and a board certified internist and founder of The Dubin Breast Center at The Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York City, knew that wasn't the way to treat a patient. She was about to face the fight of her life and she knew that she deserved better.

It was 2002 and Dubin, who had just had her third child, had not had a mammogram in more than a year. “Once I had it they told me it was fine, but called me up an hour later because they saw something, but weren't sure it

was important or just deodorant on the film,” says the now 52-year-old.

Her risk factors for breast cancer were minimal. She was 34 when she had her first child, but no one in her family had ever had any form of cancer, so the odds were in her favor. That is, until the doctor called with the diagnosis no woman wants to hear. “It was shocking,” she says. “I had just helped one of my closest friends go through the exact same cancer diagnosis. I was super busy with a 7, 5 and 1 year old and this was out of nowhere.”

One call changed her life forever. “I was scared I would have an advanced stage of breast cancer, I wouldn't see my children grow up and I'd be dead in

a year or two,” she says. As a physician, she knew too much about cancer and test results. “I knew exactly what needed to be confirmed. I also remember grabbing on to any cancer survivor who survived for more than two years and hoped I would become one of them. I loved talking to them because it was very encouraging and I tried focusing on the positive.”

She consulted with multiple doctors who could coordinate her care. She was diagnosed with an early stage of breast cancer, but it was decided that a mastectomy was what she needed to do. “I didn't need chemo, but I knew I didn't want radiation,” she says.

Dubin has lived a wonderful life, traveling the world as an international model, but medicine was her calling. Years earlier, she made a conscious decision to complete her pre-medicine program in Sweden. “When I was younger, I was fascinated by hospitals,” she says. “I loved the smells and the sounds and I could see myself taking care of people. When I got older I knew I needed to go into the field so I could learn more. It was always fascinating to read about your body and it was interesting being a mix of a detective and a scientist. It was a right fit for me.”

But she also was drawn to the life of a model. “I wanted to see the world and make money, so I figured I would take off one year, but one turned into four,” she says. “It was very hard to stop. I was having a good time traveling, but an opportunity came up to go back to school and I took it.”

After her experience with breast cancer, Dubin decided that it was time to give back. “My husband, Glenn, and I looked into doing something for the hospital and we suggested creating a breast cancer center,” she says.



Photo courtesy Stefan Andersson

The couple donated \$16 million to create The Dubin Breast Center at The Mount Sinai Medical Center. “I had no intention to enter into the breast cancer field,” she says. “But it's very unusual to have the experience of being philanthropist, patient and physician. It makes me very invested in the place because it carries our name.”

The Dubin Breast Center is a multi-disciplinary facility that includes oncofertility, nutrition, and mental health counseling, in addition to massage therapy, acupuncture and other complementary services, all under one roof. The center offers 3D mammography and new procedures like seed localization, which allows surgeons to better target and remove breast tumors. “Our goal for The Dubin Breast Center is to provide patients with seamless care,” she says. “From breast cancer screening to diagnosis to treatment and survivorship, patients receive personalized, comprehensive care in a welcoming, private



The Dubin Family, from the left: Jordan, Celina, Maya, Glenn and Eva

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and reassuring setting.”

She says that she is obsessed with keeping the place clean. “We don’t use wall to wall rugs and I almost want to ask patients to take their shoes off,” she laughs. “But I want it to be clean, and the quality of care inside the center is the most important thing. All of our doctors are hand-picked and the best of the best. I’m most proud of the personnel we have hired.”

She meets with every employee to ask them how they are doing and how they can make the center better. “I meet with patients too,” she says. “They have a different experience than I had and I want to hear what their ideas are.”

To those women who are going through treatment or were just diagnosed Dubin says, “Breast cancer today has a very good prognosis. We find breast cancer earlier, and we have very

high survival rates. Don’t panic, and go to someone who specializes in breast cancer. It’s a journey that, at the end of the day, will make you a stronger, better person.”

Dubin says it changed her life for the better. “All of a sudden, I was faced with the fact that something was affecting my life and I started appreciating my life, friends and family on a level I wasn’t aware of before. I’m humble and thankful for every day.”

Today, Dubin is healthy and makes sure to get checked every six months. “I get nervous though, but I’m not walking around looking for lumps and bumps.”

For more information, visit [www.dubinbreastcenter.org](http://www.dubinbreastcenter.org)

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## ALL IN THE FAMILY

Eva Dubin’s daughter, 18 year-old Celina, wants to become a breast surgeon. She is starting Harvard University this fall and is taking pre-med classes to become a doctor. She says her inspiration is Dr. Elisa Port, the director of The Dubin Breast Center. (Photo courtesy Gosta Andersson)



### **When did you decide you wanted to become a breast surgeon and did your mother’s diagnosis play a factor in that?**

I’ve always been interested in science and biology. During the last couple years I’ve been shadowing a lot of surgeons and specifically have become interested in breast surgery after spending some time with Dr. Elisa Port, chief breast surgeon at The Mount Sinai Medical Center, who is very inspiring. This, more than my mother’s diagnosis, has led me to be interested in breast surgery. My mother’s diagnosis probably has strengthened my interest in medicine.

### **Your mother had breast cancer. Talk about how you feel about your risk increasing?**

I know by being a daughter of a breast cancer survivor I’m at an increased risk of breast cancer myself. However, I am lucky that my mother does not carry the mutation called the BRCA gene. As a result of my mother’s diagnosis, I am definitely more aware of early screening and will be followed in a center that specializes in breast cancer.

### **Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

I see myself living in New York City, hopefully having completed medical school at a great institution and working as a surgeon, specializing in breast surgery.

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