What is your role at Johns Hopkins?
As the associate vice chair of pediatric ambulatory quality and safety, I work with a team to improve quality, safety, patient experience, value and equity in the care that we deliver to our patients and families to improve outcomes. I also co-direct the Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality Leadership Academy. At my core, I am a primary care pediatrician and the assistant medical director of the Harriet Lane Clinic, which includes resident physicians and serves the East Baltimore population. My various roles in research, education and clinical care focus on improving the quality and safety of the lives of children and their families. It is inspiring to see the great improvement work being done across our institution.

How long have you been with Johns Hopkins?
I have been at Hopkins for 10 years, starting at the Bloomberg School of Public Health with training in epidemiology and biostatistics through the Preventive Medicine Residency Program, a research fellowship in general academic pediatrics and comparative effectiveness research, and now on faculty in the Department of Pediatrics and with the Armstrong Institute.

How has your identity as an Asian-American helped shape your work and experiences?
I was an English major in college and focused on marginalized voices in American literature. I was influenced by the words of Maxine Hong Kingston, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Tomás Rivera and Sandra Cisneros. I was struck by the diversity of Asian-American experiences and the similarities yet differences in experiences across cultures. Learning from these experiences at such an influential time in my life helped form a sense of awareness of self and others, and cemented the importance of including these different voices in our discussions throughout our lives — at home and at work.

This idea of similarities within differences has really hit home with the recent movement toward reconciliation between North and South Korea. Ever since the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, I remember thinking that this could and will happen one day in Korea. The war between North and South Korea is part of my family history. While my mother’s family is from South Korea, my father’s family is from North Korea and escaped to the South. My grandfather returned multiple times during the war to lead our family to the South, but to this day part of my extended family remains physically divided since 1953.

Who were your role models or key influences growing up?
My parents have exemplified and instilled in me the meaning of love and respect, and compassion for yourself and others. My mother is my model for communication and empathy. My parents and many teachers throughout my education have been models of excellence and inspire me to pass along what I have received. I am proud of my Korean heritage and hope my son will continue to share the value of family, which grounds me and guides my decisions as a leader, parent and physician each and every day.

What message do you have for the Johns Hopkins community about serving and supporting Asian/Pacific-Americans?
There is a wealth of diversity, even within the Asian/Pacific-American community. Take time to hear their stories, which are interwoven in the fabric of our community and country.

What advice can you give other Asian/Pacific-Americans pursuing medicine?
Medicine is an amazing field, and it is an honor to be able to positively impact the lives of many people. People entrust their health and their lives to us — it is a privilege. Do what you love, both inside and outside of medicine, and be good to yourself along the journey.