

**40**  
*under*  
**Forty**

**CRAIN'S**  
NEW YORK BUSINESS  
NEW YORK BUSINESS.COM  
Powered by Crain's

# NEW YORK'S RISING STARS

[SELECT ANOTHER YEAR](#)

[<< Previous Profile](#)

[Complete 2006 List](#)

[Next Profile >>](#)



Photo by Buck Ennis

Please note: All information reflects age, title and company at date of publication.

**Jonathan Chen, 37**

**2006**

## Heart surgeon's tiny challenges

**Chief of pediatric cardiac surgery**

**New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center**

By Samantha Marshall

As far as Jonathan Chen's family was concerned, his career in medicine was a foregone conclusion. The adored child of Chinese immigrant parents, he was the son and grandson of renowned doctors.

But he himself wasn't so sure. He almost switched into comparative literature at Yale, until the chief of neurosurgery at the Mayo Clinic--where his father worked--invited him to watch brain surgery.

"I was horrified and excited at the same time," recalls Dr. Chen, who ditched Virginia Woolf for the thrill of repairing tiny mitral valves.

To have done otherwise would have been a waste of life-saving talent.

"He's the young Derek Jeter of cardiac surgery, a fantastic all-around player," says Dr. Eric Rose, chief of surgery at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia.

Dr. Chen, whose office walls are covered with pictures of his pint-sized patients, is one of the youngest people to direct a major program at a top academic hospital. A key player in New York-Presbyterian's \$60 million pediatric cardiac care operations, he is leading research into alternatives for transplants, and he was among the first to implant a heart pump into an infant.

Dr. Chen became interested in pediatric heart surgery because of the technical challenge of working on a complex organ the size of a kumquat. Operating on children with congenital heart defects "is like a chess game where you are always thinking several moves ahead," he says.

When he needs a break, he hops on his new tangerine Vespa. "Riding it helps me relieve stress. It's the only time I don't have to think," he remarks.

[<< Previous Profile](#)

[Complete 2006 List](#)

[Next Profile >>](#)