

Ten Years in Academic Dermatology

It is hard to imagine that 10 years have passed since I started my academic practice at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Upon reflection, it has been an interesting journey to say the least. I was told, “You cannot possibly think that you can have an academic practice that is dedicated to the practice of cosmetic surgery.” Not to mention that I was talking about starting this practice in Pittsburgh, where we are at the crossroads of the Midwest and the East Coast. Easterners view us as the Midwest, and Pittsburghers view themselves as East Coasters.

However, it took some degree of stubbornness (or naivety) on my part and a young, progressive chairman to come to an agreement that in order to succeed in this endeavor, we must position ourselves as the most advanced center for our tri-state area. We have strived to stay abreast of the latest technology constantly.

The culmination of this effort is that we have had approximately 32 dermatology residents and 5 cosmetic dermatologic surgery fellows matriculate through our program. In addition, we are collaborating with the plastic surgery department to train their residents on many advanced facial cosmetic surgery procedures.

What could possibly inspire a cosmetic dermatologist to follow an academic career path? The answer comes down to mentorship. I was fortunate enough to have had an amazing mentor in our department at the University of Pittsburgh while I was a resident. Dr. Bridenstine (Dr. B, as we know him) always kept abreast of the surgical literature and unwittingly inspired some residents to collaborate on research in laser surgery or to collaborate on articles on skin rejuvenation or skin resurfacing. I went on to do a cosmetic dermatologic surgery fellowship under his guidance.

However, his commitment to his mentee included encouraging me to become the Literature Review Editor for the *American Journal of Cosmetic Surgery*,

a laborious job dedicated to reading and summarizing the relevant literature from dermatology and plastic surgery as it pertains to the field of cosmetic surgery. Simultaneously, Dr. B recommended me to serve on several committees and eventually on the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery. Currently I serve as the Vice President of this board and am grateful for my mentor’s introduction to this academy.

How does this experience shape me as an instructor today? As I trained my cosmetic surgery fellows, they assisted in the literature review in addition to working on a relevant research project at the same time. It was always an important area of emphasis to balance out the “fun” of performing procedures with building a broad knowledge base. The critical area that separates most traditional surgical procedures from cosmetic procedures is the publication of evidence-based research and valid scientific studies. I try to emphasize that each and every thing we do in our practice can have a sound scientific base to it. We can look back at the benchmark studies on photoaging, for example, and understand how to better rejuvenate the skin no matter what new modality we are presented with.

I feel the same way toward the residents that rotate through their cosmetic surgery rotation. I have been fortunate enough to have an extremely bright cohort of residents who are fresh and eager to absorb knowledge about the skin, surgeries, lasers, and the importance of the physician-patient relationship. And I push them to excel in their rotation if they show the interest to do so.

This is highlighted in this issue of *Cosmetic Dermatology*. We are fortunate enough to have this journal feature our department for the third time. And I am proud to say that it may be our best edition so far. The articles range from a case report of a very unusual reaction to a hyaluronic acid filler to a review article on inflammatory linear verrucous epidermal nevus and other epidermal hamartomas, to an algorithm for the treatment of keloids

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EDITORIAL

and hypertrophic scarring with the goal of minimizing surgery, and to a retrospective article on the safety of storing and reusing hyaluronic acid filler syringes.

Two articles are written in collaboration with my residents; one is a collaboration with a current resident, and the other is written with one who just graduated and has now gone into private practice. And one article is a collaboration between myself and a former

fellow of mine; it is one of 3 that we have collaborated on since the completion of her fellowship. At the end of the day, it is all about passing the baton on to a newer generation of physicians equipped with the scientific background to keep our progress moving forward.

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