

# THE MEDICAL PATIENT IS YOUR COSMETIC PATIENT – WHY SKIN IS REALLY IN

In this guest Cosmetic Clinic column, Dr. Mary Lupo provides excerpts from her July 2015 presentation at the Cosmetic Bootcamp, held in Aspen, CO. She explains how your medical patient is also your next cosmetic patient. ~Kenneth Beer, MD.

MARY LUPO, MD



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The specialty of dermatology has evolved dramatically in the 34 years since I started my residency at Tulane Medical School in New Orleans, LA. Although our program was the preeminent residency program for dermabrasion resurfacing thanks to the cutting edge advances of the esteemed John Yarborough, MD, we were only performing wire-brush dermabrasion for acne scarring and doing the old, tradition full-plug hair transplant technique. These were rather invasive and limiting in scope.

## AESTHETIC REVOLUTION

As chief resident in 1983, I read about sclerotherapy and Trichloroacetic acid, or TCA, peels. About that same time, Zyderm collagen implants came to market. I went to my program chair, Larry Millikan, MD, and asked if I could add a clinic expressly to learn and practice these less aggressive techniques. We always recruited our medical patients who had cosmetic issues to be our guinea pigs. These patients trusted us and allowed us to practice these new skills on them for a significantly reduced fee. These patients had entrusted their medical care to us at Big Charity hospital, so I suppose they decided to trust us “rookies” with these cosmetic procedures. But the truth was, back then, all dermatologists were rookies at cosmetic procedures, so we really got on the ground floor with a revolution. By the time I completed my residency, I was quite adept at dermal filling, mid-level chemical peels, sclerotherapy, and of course, dermabrasion. So when I was ready to go out into the world, there was really no practice in dermatology in New Orleans with an emphasis on aesthetics, so The Lupo Center for Aesthetic and General Dermatology was born.

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Dermatologists are uniquely positioned to build a cosmetic practice. Skin conditions are very visible and obvious and the medical management of these conditions usually does not address the aesthetic issues that often accompany them. Just as acne can be controlled medically, but the discoloration and scarring require intervention with a laser or filler, so often

does the medical management of rosacea fail to improve the accompanying redness, flushing and telangiectasia.

Medical management of solar-induced hyperpigmentation and melasma is often short of the mark and patients can benefit from peels or low-level energy devices. Lastly, aging of the skin is the result of chronic, life-long, often insidious damage from ultraviolet and infrared rays of the sun. These are our patients. Dermatologists excel at recognizing pre-cancerous changes of the skin as well as early recognition of skin malignancies. These medical patients have accompanying aesthetic concerns that occur from that same solar radiation. These patients benefit from complementing aesthetic treatments that not just improve the appearance of the skin but also may reduce the risk of future lesions. Finally, with all medical dermatological conditions that have crossover needs into the aesthetic arena, the dermatologist is adept at designing skin care protocols that maintain the improvements longer as well as reduce the recurrence of the primary medical problem.

## EDUCATING PATIENTS

Dermatologists are very comfortable with minimally invasive procedures. Indeed, most of the procedures popular today in this time of minimal to no-downtime treatments have been invented or perfected by dermatologists. The medical patient is often very patient and is completely amenable to a series of treatments rather than a one time, aggressive surgical procedure. This makes the medical patient a very easy convert to the minimally invasive procedures that we specialize in. The key is to make the medical patient aware that you are skilled in this procedure, that you are aware of the physiological impact of these cosmetic problems and that you care enough to address their concerns.

You and your engaged and vested staff can effectively educate patients. Brochures, before and after photos, and information on your website are also essential to conversion. Patient selection and informed consent about each procedure are the final necessary steps to ensure that the medical patient who becomes your cosmetic patient stays in your practice for many years to come. ■

*Dr. Lupo is owner and medical director of The Lupo Center for Aesthetic and General Dermatology, in New Orleans, LA. She is also a founder and director of Cosmetic Bootcamp.*