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A review of Next Steps in Derm's
most read articles on
Beginning the Process

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From the Editor:

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Best Of Next Steps in Derm! We hope you enjoy some of our most popular articles from 2014, gathered together in a quarterly publication, along with exclusive content from some of the top dermatologists in the country.

Are you getting ready for your own dermatology practice? Building your career? This can be daunting, interesting, nerve-racking, inspiring and sometimes all of these... Luckily help from experienced dermatologists is always at hand with Next Steps, your *Virtual Mentor* in dermatology.

An article written exclusively for this first issue provides some great practical tips and tricks if you are thinking of going solo—including deciding where to live, figuring out what kind of practice you want, weighing the options of leasing versus buying, and setting up your office. You'll also find advice on how to prepare for your Boards, including pacing yourself in the months leading up to the test and discovering ways to make your study more varied and engaging. Unearth unique pearls on how to access additional training in procedural dermatology both during and after your schooling. Residency can fly by, and another article explores how to choose which path to follow afterwards—will it be academic dermatology, solo private practice, group practice, or a hybrid thereof? Last but not least in this issue, find out how to use social media to your best advantage, crucial in today's market.

These and future articles will give you valuable encouragement and information, easing your way through an exciting new world of discovery.

Enjoy this issue!



Daniel M. Siegel MD, MS, Senior Editor

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Going Solo:

Tips for Starting Your Own Practice



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Yes, it can be done. After literally decades of dedication, hard work and debt, it's finally time to start your own practice. The most important first step is to sit back and think of your blue sky dreams. Those are the ideas that are not clouded by reality. It's your ideal practice, what you would have if there were no rules except the ones you set for yourself. Thinking without boundaries helps you understand what you really want. The next step of course is to develop a business model and plan that will help you achieve as close to that goal as possible, understanding that reality does create obstacles and you will need to compromise, maybe more than you thought or beyond what would make it worth it to go off on your own.

Start with the Basics

A big first step is to decide where you want to live. If you have a family or are thinking of starting one, this may need to be a family discussion and team decision that may require negotiation and thought beyond just your practice. You will have to think about demographics, schools and other factors before even getting to thinking about opening an office.

It's also important to consider what kind of practice you're interested in starting. Are you a solo practitioner type, one who wants to take over the world with larger groups and

franchises, or more interested in a smaller partnership? Knowing this will define how you choose locations because you need to know who's already there and the saturation of the neighborhoods you're considering as well as the options for expansion as needed.

I remember when I was getting ready to graduate and was considering my options. I interviewed with local dermatologists to see if joining them would be for me and I also considered starting on my own. After much discussion with my husband and much back and forth with a few local dermatologists, I decided that for me the best path forward was to start my own practice. Pretty much everyone I spoke with told me that Manhattan, never mind the Upper East Side where I was looking to start, was totally saturated and the worst place to be. It did have me worried, but I moved forward because I wanted to be there and decided it was worth the risks.

I graduated on a Tuesday and started my practice on a Wednesday. I rented out space two half-days a week from a plastic surgeon who was very kind to me. I worked three days a week as paid faculty at Bellevue and I worked on an hourly basis one day a week at the NYU Student Health Center. This ensured I had income. Working at the Health Center gave me a flow of patients since many were based in NY, sent their

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families to me, and also stayed with me after they graduated. I joined the NYU UPN and performed skin cancer screenings for different corporations and that helped build the practice as well. I've never advertised or had PR because that's not my style, but that has worked for many of my colleagues. I also built my own social network, website and then Facebook and Twitter accounts as they became available.

As my practice grew, I decreased hours at the other locations, moved into my own space, and eventually gave up the Student Health Center and went to half-day-a-week voluntary faculty at Bellevue.

Leasing vs. Buying Your Space

That leads me to the next point. You've decided to go out on your own, you chose the location, you built your business model, and you have a plan. The next step is to decide on how much space you need and if you should lease or buy. There are arguments to be made for both points of view. I chose to buy. Your accountant can help you decide what is best for you. It also depends on how sure you are that you want to stay in that location over a long period of time.

Setting Up Your Office

Now the really hard part: setting up the office. You have to design the space, decide on how many exam rooms you need, hire staff, and decide on the right computer-based system for you. You must also decide if you want to be included in insurance programs, which ones, and then apply. Being paperless at this point is the only option and only way to start.

When I started, I had an office space that was larger than I needed for my practice at the time. I rented out some of the space to another physician and we worked very well together. This helped cover some of

my overhead and took pressure off me financially. As our practices grew, we reached a point where it was clear that we needed more space and he moved to a new location at the expiration of his lease with me. I eventually outgrew that space myself and had to move to a larger office, but one thing I know about myself is that I want to keep my office relatively small and personal. I have one associate who's with me two days per week. It's nice to have her there and we cover for each other when we travel. It's been almost 10 years together and we are both happy. She works off a percentage and we both feel it's fair to both of us.

The Devil's in the Details

The last point is regarding practice details. Do you lease or buy equipment? How do you build a policy and procedures manual? How do you define different roles for your staff? Speak with others who have been in practice two, five and 10 or more years out and get their perspective. It's important to have a range because insurances and rules have changed so much and you need to know the history to give perspective and to help manage your expectations

There are so many options and there's no right or wrong. You choose a path and then you make it the right one for you.

Studying for the Boards

By ALEXIS L. YOUNG, MD
"Best Of" Next Steps Online
from June 19, 2014

Weeks Leading Up to the Exam

In my opinion, studying for the boards is really much harder than the actual test itself. It is very important to pace yourself during the months leading up to the boards so that you don't burn out closer to exam time. I divided

my study materials into topics based upon the sections of the Derm In-Review study guide. I began by reviewing topics with which I was the most comfortable. By doing that, I could devote extra study time to the harder topics without feeling rushed to get through a huge number of subjects. I spent many hours of time studying almost every day after graduating from residency, but then I made sure to leave time for exercise, meals with family and friends, and other activities that would make me feel like a whole, healthy, and sane person during the process. I spent most days studying with a close friend with whom I felt completely comfortable. We studied side by side without interacting much most of the time, but if one of us needed to discuss a concept out loud, we would do that together in a non-judgemental way. We had several different study spots including various libraries, coffee shops, a friend's apartment, and our own apartments. I found it very important to change study locations because otherwise the long study days become tedious. When I tired of reading and reviewing study materials, I switched to question banks with thoughtful reviews of all answer choices as a way to make studying a little more varied and engaging.

Week Before the Exam

During the week before the exam, I made sure to get lots of sleep. I woke up each morning at the time I would need to awaken on exam day to prepare myself. By the week before the exam, I had already completed review of all topics. I spent the last few days going back to the concepts that I felt needed a little refreshing. Since most people taking the exam must fly to the testing center, the travel day actually serves as a nice distraction from the monotony of studying. I did not study in the hotel prior to the exam; however, I did bring my study materials with me in case I wanted to look something up last minute. Instead, I enjoyed nice meals out and felt more relieved than anything that the endless days of studying were almost behind me. On the day before the exam, you might want to head to the pharmacy across the street from the hotel to stock up on snacks and drinks for exam day breaks. Do everything that you can to relax and ensure a good night's sleep the night before the exam. If you are a light sleeper, ask for a room far from the elevators in the hotel

where the test is administered as they can be a bit noisy.

Day of the Exam

Eat a good breakfast on the day of the exam. When you wake up, feel comforted by the fact that this whole ordeal will be over soon.

The testing center itself is very comfortable. Everyone gets their own L-shaped, very private desk with a wide area to spread out. The microscopes are not the best quality, but they are adequate for reading the limited number of slides given during the test.

You spent a huge amount of time conditioning yourself for the exam—recalling information is your only job and one that you have prepared for with numerous tests in the past. The board exam really is just another test. Don't rush through the exam sections as you are given plenty of time. Read each question and the answer choices thoroughly and then trust your gut instinct. Just remember that you don't have to know every question, just most (which you will).

After the Exam

Take a deep breath, celebrate, and feel proud of yourself. Go back to living your life and be excited about the next stage of your career. It only gets better!

How to Get Additional Procedural Dermatology Training During (and After) Residency

By JARED JAGDEO, MD
"Best Of" Next Steps Online
from August 12, 2014

When you are a resident you feel that residency training will last forever. It sure felt that way when I was a resident! However, dermatology training is three short years—and those years fly by. There is so much to learn, ranging from general derm, pediatric dermatology, dermatopathology, procedural dermatology and practical real life dermatology! One area that many residents feel they could benefit from

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enhanced training—either due to professional interest or to get additional exposure during residency—is procedural dermatology. This article is designed to share a few pearls on how to get additional training in procedural dermatology. Some of the main options are described below.

Elective Time

Consider using elective time during residency to observe or rotate with a dermatologist that specializes in the technique you are interested in learning more about. The American Society for Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS), Women's Dermatologic Society (WDS) and American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery (ASLMS) offer stipends to facilitate preceptorships that can be used to travel to gain additional procedural training during residency and sometimes after residency. I am always enthusiastic to serve as a mentor either as part of these programs or independent of these programs. Sometimes the mentor hosting you during these observerships is affiliated with a fellowship program. These observerships can be a good opportunity to "audition" for a fellowship position post-residency.

Conferences

Attending conferences or meetings for additional didactic training or hands-on training is a great opportunity to enhance your procedural training aptitude. Also, attending conferences that highlight aspects of procedural dermatology that you might not have had exposure to during residency—such as skin of color, or from a procedural standpoint, lasers—helps enhance your understanding of procedural dermatology.

At Your Home Program During Residency

It is wonderful when you can use your current patient population to enhance your procedural dermatology skills. With the permission of your attendings, engage your patients and ask them if there are any aesthetic treatments they desire. You'll be surprised at how many would like to have a skin tag or neurofibroma removed, or an irritated seborrheic keratosis treated. These ubiquitous skin lesions are bread and butter conditions that require procedural expertise,

so take advantage of honing your procedural technique by removing these conditions if your patients desire them treated. By doing so, you'll realize that you can really make patients happier by taking care of "the little things" that you might not have thought of treating initially.

How to Choose Which Path to Follow After Residency

By JARED JAGDEO, MD
"Best Of" Next Steps Online
from January 1, 2014

First and foremost, congratulations on getting into dermatology residency and nearing completion! Everyone's path to arriving at this point is varied, and there are so many wonderful things you can do with your selected field of medicine.

To start, as a resident, focus on excelling at general dermatology. General dermatology is the foundation of your future career, and needed whether you pursue dermatopathology, surgery, or pediatric dermatology. Selecting the path to follow after residency is a process that begins before you start residency, it continues during, and even after you complete residency. I recommend that by the end of your first year to middle of your second year that it is good to start thinking of your future niche in dermatology. One big fork in the road is selecting between academic dermatology, solo private practice, group practice, or a hybrid thereof.

Seek out wonderful mentors. Start locally. Find someone, or several people, in your department who have successfully mentored others before. Keep an open mind. You might come into residency thinking you want to surgically subspecialize, and then discover your passion for pediatric dermatology, or basic science research! You never know who, or what might catch your interest, and the opportunities to network and develop those interests are seemingly limitless. During residency, you might realize that you have an affinity towards one aspect of dermatology—once you find what moves you, pursue it! Using elective time, free time (nights and weekends), or even

vacation time to explore your interests is a good start. Consider attending a conference in your area of interest. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) is a good starting point. The American Society of Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS), Mohs College Meeting, Society for Investigative Dermatology (SID), American Society for Mohs Surgery (ASMS), Society for Pediatric Dermatology, American Society of Dermatopathology (ASDP), and Medical Dermatology Society (MDS) all have great standalone meetings. Consider subspecialty forums at each of these meetings. For instance, the SID has a Dermato-Epidemiology meeting. While at these meetings, it is good to network with peers and attendings (who will become your future colleagues). Meetings are a great place for sharing ideas, learning, having fun, and educating yourself about future job prospects.

Furthermore, you should try to start your job search at the beginning of your third year, and attempt to have a job secured by or before the In-Service, allowing you time to study for your Boards (and not job hunt at the same time). Finally, many people switch jobs once or more within the first few years post residency. This happens due to personal changes or professional changes—note that this is okay. Remember, your career will continue to evolve and you can mold this process as you continue to grow as a person and physician.

How to Utilize Social Media

By WENDY E. ROBERTS, MD
 “Best Of” Next Steps Online
 from July 28, 2014

Social media is huge and very important. To that end I would not try to be your own social media person. Designate someone to do your social media. Although you can do it well, there are people who can do it better, and I would utilize those people's services. It frees you up to think about what you want to say, so you can focus on content, while the experts get to think about how to deliver that content.

- One tip is to really monitor the media. You can

always comment on stories; for instance, I just tweeted about how people were bullying on a celebrity (Kim Novak) and commented on how these celebrities were under great pressure to look young, etc. That's an example of how you can use the news to make social commentary and that's a great way to build followers.

- Instagram is great in terms of pictures but be careful about the patient identity, you never want to compromise the patient's identity by posting Facebook/Instagram pictures without consent.

- Before and after photos are great for websites and people get a real idea of how you practice. It's not a deal breaker if you don't have them, but if you do have them, make sure the patients have signed waivers.

- Make sure your name is optimized in search engines like Google, Bing, etc. (SEO). You may be surprised, when you search dermatologists in your area, to see that your name may not show up. This is an example of how to use a social media expert wisely—they make sure you are on all of the search engines.

- I have a card in my office that says “If you had a great experience with Dr. Roberts, please go to the following websites and let us know.” It is helpful if you direct them to sites that you are not highly scored on, or if you've had some negative comments. It's a great tool for reputation repair.

- If your patients are happy and you've cleared their acne, lay a card on them and just say, please share this with your community.

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