

# Tips for Teaching Cosmetic Dermatology to Residents

Cosmetic dermatology can make a positive difference in patients' lives. For instance, human immunodeficiency virus-associated lipoatrophy can be stigmatizing and socially destructive. In this issue, Schweiger and colleagues<sup>1</sup> discuss treatment of this condition with dermal fillers. This is an excellent example of using a cosmetic dermatology technique to help people feel whole again.

Educators are now facing the question of what role cosmetic training should play in dermatology residency programs. The most important aspect of dermatology residency training is learning the core competencies of medical dermatology, surgical dermatology, and dermatopathology. However, most programs now offer some cosmetic procedural experience, either directly or via affiliate private practices. The goal is to allow trainees to become competent in, or at least acquainted with, basic cosmetic procedures.

The importance of teaching cosmetic dermatology has been previously touched upon by Narurkar.<sup>2</sup> We agree with Narurkar's assessment and feel there are several reasons why dermatology residents should be taught cosmetic procedures. Perhaps the most important reason is that, as future board-certified dermatologists, residents are expected to be skilled in all aspects involving the skin, including basic cosmetic procedures. For instance, even if a particular dermatologist does not wish to offer cosmetic procedures, that physician should still be educated enough to address patients' cosmetic concerns. The American Council on Graduate Medical Education also recognizes the importance of these concerns.<sup>3</sup> The board-certifying exam now includes questions relating to botulinum toxin, laser physics, chemical peels, and fillers. In addition, dermatology training programs can be cited for insufficiency if they do not provide basic exposure to cosmetic dermatology.

This editorial will outline some methods for residents to gain exposure to cosmetic dermatology. Our division uses several of these approaches.

## Have Pharmaceutical or Device Representatives Donate Products for Teaching Purposes

Approximately 1 to 2 times per month, we have faculty-supervised training sessions where residents learn and practice different cosmetic procedures. The patients are

comprised of fellow residents and volunteers recruited from the nursing staff and the front desk staff. Most patients are usually comfortable with a resident performing a procedure as long as it is supervised. Certainly, when procedures are offered *gratis*, it is not hard to find eager volunteers. Regular sessions have included botulinum toxin type A, Restylane®, calcium hydroxylapatite, sclerotherapy, and laser techniques.

## Attend Workshops and Conferences

Attending workshops and conferences is also a good way for residents to gain exposure to cosmetic procedures. The American Society of Cosmetic Dermatology & Aesthetic Surgery offers an annual conference in December that residents may attend free of charge, with airfare and hotel accommodations provided.<sup>4</sup> In January, the Orlando Dermatology and Aesthetic Conference also provides residents with exposure to cosmetic procedures.<sup>5</sup> The conference fee is waived, and shared hotel accommodations are provided for residents free of charge. The American Society for Dermatologic Surgery also offers periodic workshops that are discounted for residents.<sup>6</sup> The annual American Academy of Dermatology meeting offers several workshops and courses for those interested in cosmetic procedures.

## Shadow Local Dermatologists in the Community

Although not all programs can provide comprehensive cosmetic training, community dermatologists who perform cosmetic procedures are often comfortable having a resident shadow them. Some private practice dermatologists have weekend or evening office hours, which are compatible with a motivated resident's schedule.

## Read Relevant Textbook Chapters and Journals

Most major dermatology textbooks have chapters on cosmetic dermatology. For example, *Dermatology* by Bologna et al<sup>7</sup> dedicates 9 chapters to topics such as lasers, sclerotherapy, and soft tissue augmentation. Additionally, dermatology residents receive complimentary issues of several journals that frequently cover cosmetic topics. These journals include *Cosmetic Dermatology*®, *Dermatologic Surgery*, and *Drugs in Dermatology*, among others.

### Summary

We strongly feel that thoroughly teaching medical and surgical dermatology is the most important aspect of training, but there is a need for residents to be trained in cosmetic dermatology as well. Although the latter training will likely take a backseat to the more traditional curriculum, we hope that these tips will help provide residency directors and dermatology residents with a supplement to their training experience.

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### References

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