

Editorial

Welcome Wishes

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July has arrived, and with it, a new group of dermatology residents. To those individuals, welcome to a wonderful profession. You enter at a very exciting and dynamic time, with constant advances in medical and cosmetic dermatology. After 7 years of practice, I still feel quite fortunate and excited to be a dermatologist.

To those entering the field, I want to make some recommendations. The first few months of dermatology residency are an exhilarating experience for most; after years of medical training, it is almost impossible to believe that you get to go home at a reasonable hour, that your evenings belong to you, and that you do not have to take in-house calls. After this initial honeymoon period, however, it has been my experience that many (not all) lose this appreciation, feel diminished motivation, and begin to view residency as a burden. This is not only frustrating for those of us teaching residency programs but also a waste of a special opportunity for those individuals.

Therefore, I present the following challenges to the incoming residency class, goals to pursue now and throughout your residency.

1. *Make yourself the best dermatologist you can be.*

This may sound trite, but it is essential. Although the educational process is lifelong, you will lay the foundation for your dermatologic knowledge and skills during residency. See as many patients as you can, use your faculty as resources, and read your texts and journals. Many practicing clinicians find very little time for the latter. Learn, learn, learn.

Many residents often question why they need to expend time and energy to learn so much “minutia” during residency. When I was a resident, it was emphasized to my group that the ability to recognize rare entities is what separates us from primary care physicians. They can treat acne, eczema, and other common problems. But it is this extra knowledge

that both makes us specialists and, more importantly, allows us to recognize and help people with these problems.

2. *Make your program the best it can be.* Your program provided you with a dermatology spot, so give something back. Represent the program well by giving presentations at local and national meetings. Participate in voluntary events in the community such as patient education and skin cancer screenings. Help out in any way you can within the program. Due to the current difficult financial climate, you will discover that many residency programs are understaffed, both in administration and nursing. So do not be too proud to contribute, even if it means doing some of the “scut” work.

3. *Make the field the best it can be.* Most importantly, take good care of your patients and act with compassion. Contribute to dermatologic knowledge and advances in our field. As time permits, write papers, participate in clinical research projects, and join local and national committees.

4. *Appreciate your time as a resident.* For every qualified individual in a dermatology program, there are probably 2 equally qualified physicians who wanted to be dermatologists, but will *never* be dermatologists. Take full advantage of it, and never take it for granted. Every day, when you go to work in the morning, remember this fact. Every time you feel burdened, disenchanted, or tired of residency, consider this fact.

The funny thing is, you can do all of this and still go home at a reasonable hour. Best wishes to all of you for a fulfilling 3 years, both professionally and personally.