

# **Why Dermatology?**

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## Why Dermatology?

# 28 Dermatologists Offer Reasons Why They Chose the Specialty

## 1

I became a cosmetic dermatologist because I've always been fascinated to observe how the skin is the nexus of all factors affecting beauty, from your spiritual being to your pheromones, your genetic imprints to your lifestyle. If, as the poets say, your eyes are the window to your soul, then surely your skin is its mirror. I have been fortunate to develop relationships with my patients that extend beyond cold, clinical confines to encompass a level of trust and intimacy that I believe has few parallels in other medical fields. The nature of my work is part science and part art. My years of experience as a cosmetic dermatologist have utterly convinced me of the positive effects of cosmetic surgery performed for the right reasons.<sup>1</sup>

- Dr. Hema Sundaram

## 2

I think I make a difference every day. And I see it in the satisfaction that I see in people's faces after our encounter together. People leave feeling a little better, that even if we can't cure their disease, they at least have a better understanding of it; they have a better understanding of how to manage it; they have a better understanding of how to live with it; and just putting it into context for them. I think that dermatology is a field that really is very underappreciated. It's very poorly understood, actually, by physicians and patients as well. We tend to kind of trivialize skin, when we think about it. People tend to think of things like acne as kind of trivial. But even when we're talking about acne, if you're the person who has really severe acne, there's nothing trivial about a severe skin condition. In addition, skin cancer is a huge epidemic right now. I don't think that people realize that half of all the cancers that are being diagnosed right now are skin cancers. There's about a hundred thousand people dying every year of skin cancer. There are fifty thousand new cases of melanoma being diagnosed in the United States every year. That's an amazingly high number. The best treatment, the state-of-the-art treatment for melanoma at this point, is surgical. So when you have an atypical nevus—a mole that is irregular, atypical—then what we need to do surgically remove the mole itself and some surrounding skin, to try to get that off of the patient before the horse is out of the barn, so to speak. And if we can do that, then it's a hundred percent cure.<sup>2</sup>

- Dr. Nancy Jasso

## Why Dermatology?

### 3

I chose dermatology because it was the best taught course in my four years of medical school. It appealed to me because the patient's problem was clearly visible. I did not need a battery of tests and x-rays to find the problem. Furthermore I had a good visual memory and enjoyed being a friend of the patient. Finally, I had decided I wanted to spend half-time every day doing research and half-time practicing. No other specialty gave me this privilege.<sup>3</sup>

- Walter B. Shelley, M.D., Ph.D., MACP

### 4

The first doctor, the existence of whom I perceived as a child, was an unbelievably kind man as well as a great expert. He was a dermatologist. It was also thanks to him that I have realized that dermatology is one of the most beautiful as well as most creative branches of medicine, both theoretically and practically, for the expert knowledge and experience is day by day confronted with the actual therapy outcome and success in every single patient. Moreover, dermatology is a multidisciplinary branch, not allowing one to stagnate.<sup>4</sup>

- Hana Zelenková, M.D., Ph.D

### 5

It allows me to correlate the cutaneous changes observed with the naked eye with the alterations disclosed under the microscope. Likewise, it provides an opportunity to directly view the course, either natural or therapy-induced, of the disease. Furthermore, it is a specialty where diseases are classified according to their etiopathogenesis.<sup>5</sup>

- Jorge Abulafia, MD, DMS

### 6

I was on my way to a career in psychiatry when I discovered dermatology, which held huge appeal for me because it requires real artistry. Unlike most medical specialties, the results of the dermatologist's work are very visible. It was for me. Well, saving a life has to come first. No matter what has been going on professionally or personally for me, when I find and cure a melanoma it is most gratifying. Additionally restoring health, relieving misery, and restoring self-esteem rank right up there. If I solve a difficult puzzling disorder, that too is very gratifying.<sup>6</sup>

- Dr. Alexander Lewis

## Why Dermatology?

### 7

I ultimately chose dermatology because it would allow me to combine medicine and surgery, and it's largely procedure oriented. And I knew I would be working mostly with healthy people; patients come in with a specific problem, and for the most part you're able to fix it. It's very satisfying in that way.<sup>7</sup>

- Dr. Debra Wattenberg

### 8

Academic dermatology provides the greatest opportunity to impact the lives of our patients and the knowledge and future direction of our medical students and dermatology residents. Academic dermatology is enjoyable, stimulating, an honor, and a significant responsibility to our patients, medical students, and dermatology residents.<sup>8</sup>

- Mark A. Bechtel, MD

### 9

I'm in academics for three reasons. The most important is that I'm dedicated to teaching residents how to think logically about dermatologic disease and therapy and to helping them become outstanding physicians. Second is having the chance to work on widely varying projects, from operations of the clinical practice, to designing residency curricula, to developing administrative policies. Finally, I love the pure intellectual challenge of having to know enough about dermatology to be able to care for the patients with the most interesting, challenging diseases in all of medicine.<sup>9</sup>

- Matthew J. Zirwas, MD

### 10

I choose Dermatology because of the visual emphasis of the specialty. Each rash is a picture and by looking at the rash you know what it is. It was like identifying artists' works for me and I was good at it in school. Plus much of the training was very surgical which I found intensely interesting and fulfilling.<sup>10</sup>

- Dr. Lenore Sikorski

## Why Dermatology?

# 11

A recent study conducted by UC Davis has found that dermatology ranks as one of the most satisfying medical specialties to practice. One of the reasons dermatology tops the charts is its diversity, ranging from medical to aesthetic. This couldn't be more true for my practice. Being able to help a patient suffering from acne or skin cancer to advising another on choosing a cosmetic treatment right for them is one aspect of my job that I enjoy immensely. There is nothing more satisfying than helping patients set and achieve their skin goals, seeing them through the process from beginning to end. It's the relationships I have with my patients who are of all ages and walks of life that always keep me smiling.<sup>11</sup>

- Kathleen M. Welsh, MD

# 12

Dermatology is a specialty that is deeply satisfying because there are many treatments that are effective and can really improve the quality of life for our patients.<sup>12</sup>

- Dr. Jesse Kramer

# 13

Dermatology is a specialty in which the patient and doctor are partners and readily know when a therapy is successful or not. This especially close relationship between the patient and doctor is one of the most satisfying characteristics of the field. This quality of being readily visible also makes Dermatology the specialty best poised to take advantage of the information and imaging revolution. New technologies for the collection, transmission, and interpretation of skin images are now revolutionizing the art of Dermatology. The rapidly expanding scientific base of Dermatology, including understanding many diseases at their fundamental genetic level, has expanded the sophistication of the clinical dermatologist and increased the need for Dermatology training to possess an excellent scientific and technical base.<sup>13</sup>

- Alice P. Pentland, M.D.  
Professor and Chair  
Department of Dermatology  
University of Rochester Medical Center

## Why Dermatology?

# 14

There is no other field in medicine or surgery where a physician is so well trained in pathology, medical diseases and surgical skills as dermatology. Dermatologists have a holistic understanding of the disease process that I have found extremely satisfying.<sup>14</sup>

- Dr. Neil Shah

# 15

I chose to practice dermatology because a person's skin is their 'first impression' upon the world around them. To improve a patient's self-esteem, to relieve their fears or to restore a peaceful night's rest by treating a skin condition gives me the opportunity to help restore balance and peace of mind in their life.<sup>15</sup>

- Dr. Jennifer Holman

# 16

I chose dermatology because helping patients feel good about their outward appearance can have a tremendous impact on their lives. To me, there is nothing more gratifying than seeing the positive health effects, both physical and emotional, that expert treatment and compassionate care can achieve.<sup>16</sup>

- Dr. Thomas J. Lambert

# 17

I have always enjoyed the diagnosis of skin conditions, and I find it satisfying that so many conditions respond so well to treatment unlike in many other areas of medicine.<sup>17</sup>

- Dr. C. Edward Clarke III

# 18

I chose dermatology because the results can improve a person's life dramatically. You wear your skin on your sleeve, so to speak, and many times people relate to you accordingly. When your skin-related limitations are successfully treated, you often see your life with new perspective.<sup>18</sup>

- Dr. Lisa Lowry

## Why Dermatology?

### 19

I chose dermatology as my specialty because I have a great desire to help improve my patient's health through the application of the latest advances in skin care diagnosis and treatment.<sup>19</sup>

- Dr. Shanna Meads

### 20

Dermatology has always fascinated me because it's so visual; you see the results. It's also one of the last corners of medicine where there is what I call "real medicine", clinical medicine, where you look at the problem; analyze it with your eyes. You're not forever writing lab tests and sending people off to have fancy scans here, there and everywhere. You look with your eyes, listen with your ears, touch with your fingers and you figure out what is wrong with the patient, and that is fascinating and satisfying.<sup>20</sup>

### 21

One of the most compelling aspects of dermatology is the breadth of the specialty. If one likes to see general dermatology patients, one can do that all day long. However, one has the option to also specialize in pediatric dermatology, geriatric dermatology, skin cancer surgery, laser surgery, cosmetic procedures or dermpath. With all of these choices, one rarely, if ever, gets bored. The ability to grow with the specialty and grow as your interest change makes dermatology a very exciting specialty.<sup>21</sup>

- Dr. Jeffrey Dover

### 22

Diagnoses are clinical in the overwhelming majority of cases, and dermatology requires relatively few investigations. Clinically diagnosing skin disorders takes skill and experience plus a good grounding in clinical medicine. Dermatologists use a comprehensive formulary with topical therapies, systemic drugs including novel immunomodulatory drugs, phototherapies, laser treatments, cryotherapy, and other treatment modalities alone or in combination - a huge variety of treatments to manage a tremendous number of diseases.<sup>22</sup>

- *British Medical Journal*

## Why Dermatology?

### 23

When I was in medical school at Washington University, I was impressed that in the field of dermatology you could look at what was happening on the outside of someone and make a diagnosis of what was going on in the inside. I chose dermatologic surgery because I liked the fact that both benign and malignant skin diseases can be treated by using cosmetic techniques. Because skin cancer can be so devastating especially on the face or neck, we can enhance the treatment results and give people a better outcome through dermatologic surgery.<sup>23</sup>

- Dr. Eva Hurst

### 24

I love that I can cosmetically enhance the appearance of the skin while also being able to perform life-changing medical procedures, such as removal of skin cancers and varicose veins.<sup>24</sup>

- Dr. Gilly S. Munavalli

### 25

I chose dermatology because I liked the ability to diagnose without complex testing and because I could know instantly whether I knew what a patient had or not, and rather quickly whether I was helping or not.<sup>25</sup>

- Dr. Mauricio Gohman-Yahr

### 26

Dermatology is an incredible field. One of the most exciting aspects of the field is that our patients often get better. There is nothing more satisfying than a patient who comes back to the office with a beaming smile because their skin disease has gone away after you gave them the medication they needed.<sup>26</sup>

- Dr. Jeffrey S. Fromowitz

## Why Dermatology?

# 27

I think there are a lot of reasons. We see patients in the wards and around the hospital so we see them in all situations. We have lots of treatment options and we are even able to do surgery. We can remove something from someone's face and then when we see them a few months later and there is no trace of it, and that is rewarding. There is quite a lot of satisfaction in seeing that patients improve. You can see the organ you are treating unlike most of the other specialties.<sup>27</sup>

- Dr. Tim Clayton

# 28

I realized that I am a visual learner, and during my first year of medical school, I took a dermatology course, and they showed a picture of a patient with a strange rash. As it turns out, the patient had stomach cancer," he remembers. "I thought, 'How fascinating - you can actually look at the skin and make an internal diagnosis.' That was the first time that dermatology caught my eye." "I selected dermatology for several reasons. Even though it's a specialty, you still see all patients - that is, men, women, children, adults, and geriatric patients."<sup>28</sup>

- Dr. Charles Crutchfield

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