

Editorial

Dermatology: new horizons

Azim Jahangir Khan

Dermatology Department, Unit II, Allama Iqbal Medical College/Jinnah Hospital, Lahore

Dermatology has come a long way in the world of medicine. Once considered to be a “peripheral” specialty with lack of charisma associated with specialties such as cardiology and neurosurgery, dermatology has gained tremendous popularity in the eyes of fresh graduates, public and media in the last decade. Gone are the days when magnifying lenses were thought to be the only tool required by a dermatologist in his clinical practice. Today’s dermatologist endeavors to perform major surgical procedures, employs highly technical laser machinery and caters artistic cosmetic corrections to his patients. In fact dermatology probably enjoyed the last decade as the most lustrous decade since its inception as a specialty. Many new procedures and products and most of everything, the awareness of these products among the baby boomers has propelled the growth of this specialty.

This ever expanding advancement and popularity has also put tremendous moral and public pressure on the dermatologists to prove the safety, efficacy and accuracy of these products and procedure on purely impartial and scientific grounds. This is especially true with the parallel practices run by mere beauticians and estheticians that in most cases are untrained, unscientific and most unfortunately, unethical in

our part of the world. Public and patients look up to us for guidance and therapy and it is our foremost duty to do so with utmost honesty and genuine concern. This can only be done by dedicated and focused research done by none other than fully qualified and well trained dermatologists that are unbiased and have a nag for this area of specialty.

The trends in the dermatologic world have changed just as in other fields of medicine. With ongoing advancements, new revelations and changing trends in dermatology, it is impossible to master all its subspecialties. Dermatology now is considered no more than an umbrella term that covers life threatening conditions at one end and the very charming and fashionable age defying beauty treatments on the other. The constant oscillation between these two extremes has led the dermatologists all over the world to further refine, define and specify it’s various off shoots. Whenever a specialization expands and develops enough, its further growth and the excellence of its specialists lies in the subspecialization of that particular field. In the United States, at least four subspecialties in dermatology have been recognized by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) including dermatologic surgery, pediatric dermatology, immunodermatology and dermatopathology. Moreover, the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery has accredited a fellowship training in Cosmetic Dermatologic Surgery and American College of Mohs’ Micrographic Surgery

Address for correspondence

Prof. Azim Jahangir Khan,
Professor of Dermatology,
Department of Dermatology, Unit II,
Allama Iqbal Medical College /
Jinnah Hospital, Lahore
Email: dr@cosmetique.com.pk

accredits Mohs' Fellowship to Board Certified Dermatologists.

In a nutshell, all these subspecialists or super-subspecialists work very focused in their areas of interest after being trained on a broad base of dermatology. The result – ever new developments and advances take place every minute and we all reap the rewards of these inventions and discoveries. I feel, the time has come in Pakistan, when we can start introducing these subspecialties after the basic specialization in dermatology. This perhaps is also the only doable way of fulfilling the very genuine demand of public and patients of conducting

impartial scientific studies on the very mesmerizing beautifying and age defying cosmetic treatments and bringing the truth out of them. And if we don't venture into it then the non-dermatologists and even non-doctors will keep on betraying patients with their "beauty potions" and "magic fillers" bringing bad name to our beloved specialty as a whole. We can and we should device a structured fellowship program in each of the fore-mentioned subspecialties that conforms to the international standards in terms of its training content and the standardization of its evaluation process for the skills that the trainee gains over the number of months or years.