

DERMATOLOGY

Cassis Dermatology & Aesthetics Center

Going Solo to Provide a Pair of Specialties and a Full Spectrum of Services BY JENNIFER S. NEWTON

LOUISVILLE For board certified dermatologist Tami Cassis, MD, entrepreneurship and medicine are symbiotic concepts. A solo practitioner in Louisville's east end, Cassis has built her practice, Cassis Dermatology & Aesthetics Center, on the foundations of good patient care, a full continuum of services, well-established techniques, and advanced specialized training. The practice has two focal points: clinical and cosmetic dermatology. "We offer medical, surgical, and aesthetic options here, anywhere from massage to facial, from removing skin cancer to lasers, so it is a pretty broad spectrum," says Cassis.

Cassis completed her residency in dermatology at the University of Louisville in 2005, but because there were no cosmetic fellowships at the time, she felt her training was incomplete. "When I was in residency, we only had the ability to go and mentor other physicians, so that is when I took it upon myself to take every extra training course that I could on injectable fillers, injectable neurotoxins, and lasers," she explains. Cassis used her elective and vacation time to study with physicians in markets with higher volumes of cosmetic procedures, including training in Miami with Marta Rendon, MD, in New Orleans with Mary Lupo, MD, and in Beverly Hills with Ronald Moy, MD. Cassis also credits the Chairman of the UofL School of Medicine Division of Dermatology, Jeffrey P. Callen, MD, as being a motivating guide in her medical career. From a business perspective, she recognizes her father, Duane Buss, for mentoring her early in life and her husband, Chuck Cassis, an attorney, for providing the "you can do it" motivation and attitude.

Clinical and Cosmetic Dermatology

The fusion of independent business owner and physician specialist is mirrored in the duality of the center's foci. As the name implies, Cassis Dermatology & Aesthetics Center has two aspects: clinical dermatology and cosmetic dermatology. The office has 15 staff members including an aesthetician,



Tami Cassis, MD, board certified dermatologist and solo practitioner at Cassis Dermatology & Aesthetics Center of Louisville.

massage therapists, nurses who perform laser procedures, and office staff. Cassis sees a volume of about 50 patients a day, four to five days a week. "It is a fast, motivated, keep moving kind of practice here," she explains. Cassis sees patients as young as two years old and estimates that her patient mix is 75 percent adult and 25 percent teenagers and children. While women probably make up the largest percentage of her patients, she also sees a significant number of men.

On the clinical side of the practice, Cassis laments the fact that skin cancer is still the one of the most prevalent diagnosis they see. "Skin cancer is definitely on the rise, we have not gotten our hands

completely around it yet," says Cassis. "We see way too many melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers every day." Other common conditions include acne, psoriasis and common irritating rashes. Advances in dermatology have led to a variety of options in the treatment of pre-cancerous lesions. Traditional freezing of atypical lesions is still utilized. However, topical chemotherapies and immunomodulators are also available, as well as newer therapies including laser treatment, photodynamic therapy. These options allow me to help the patient choose what is best option for their situation. "We are not just treating one lesion anymore, we are treating the entire fields," says Cassis. "So with one pre-cancerous lesion on the

cheek, we are looking at the whole face and getting more aggressive because if you have one now, you probably have many more coming down the road.”

The best treatment for regular skin cancers is still surgical removal. Cassis does minor surgeries in her office, including removing small skin cancers, cysts and lipomas. Anything outside this scope is referred to a surgeon. For acne, Cassis believes in the tried-and-true routines of topical medications up to oral antibiotics and medications such as isotretinoin.

There is much cross-over between the clinical and cosmetic practices, and Cassis admits that she is a huge referral source to herself. Often, a clinical patient will also become a cosmetic patient over time. The Aesthetics Center offers a full spectrum of cosmetic services. Treatments include injectable neurotoxins such as BOTOX and Dysport; dermal fillers, including a range of semi-permanent versus hyaluronic acid-based products; chemical peels; and laser treatments, including CO2 resurfacing lasers, laser hair removal, intense pulse light, and blue light therapy. The aesthetician performs epidermal leveling for facial hair removal, facials, and customized peels. Multiple skin care lines can be tailored to fit each patient. Spa services such as massages and facials were not a part of Cassis’ original plan but were a patient-driven addition to her services.

When it comes to trends, Cassis says what is old has become new again. Chemical peels, which have been around for decades, are experiencing a resurgence with new variations, which she attributes to their relative cost efficiency. Another existing treatment that has become popular among the center’s patients is the filler Sculptra, which is a



I think I very much have the entrepreneurial spirit. When somebody tells me I can’t, I’m definitely going prove them wrong. So I did, and I haven’t looked back. It has been a great, great experience for me. – Dr. Tami Cassis

poly-L-lactic acid. It is touted as the liquid face lift but is also used in HIV lipoatrophy patients for facial muscle wasting.

Giving Back and Looking Forward

Cassis’ enthusiasm for her field is evident not only in her fast-growing practice but also in her commitment to give back to the medical community and the community at large. While cosmetic fellowships do exist now, they are not accredited or recognized yet. However, Cassis feels dermatology training has “come full circle.” She is on the faculty at UofL and now dermatology residents can spend part of their three-year residency training in her office studying both the clinical and aesthetic aspects of the field. “So straight out of the gate, first year residents are performing injections and operating lasers. They are doing everything,” says Cassis.

As a UofL faculty member, Cassis also staffs the Veterans Administrations clinic and has spearheaded an effort at the VA to teach residents specific injection therapy techniques for lipoatrophy patients, a first at the VA in Louisville. “We are serving patients that really have no other choices, and the residents are getting great exposure,” says Cassis.

Cassis also serves on the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure, a position she was nominated for by the Kentucky Medical Association and appointed to by Governor Steve Beshear. She feels honored and challenged by her duties on the board, which awards and monitors state medical licenses to physicians in the Commonwealth.

As for her private practice, Cassis expects to add another physician in the future to help keep pace with the patient volume. An indicator of her exponential growth and her entrepreneurial spirit is that she is thinking in terms of a 12-month plan and a 24-month plan, rather than five or 10 years down the road. Since the practice opened in 2008, Cassis has physically added another 1,500 square feet, but that still has not been enough. Fortunately, Cassis’ landlord is her husband, and there is more room for expansion in the building. She attributes her rapid growth to her location in the northeast corridor, an area that was lacking dermatologists. “Perfect timing, perfect place, and I have got a great staff. We bend over backwards for our patients,” says Cassis. ♦

For referrals and patient information call (502) 326-8588 or online www.cassisderm.com