

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Dr Hema Sundaram

We were delighted to chat to world-renowned **Dr Hema Sundaram** about her fascinating career in dermatology and how plans for SEASON 2020 are going.

You are internationally recognised in the fields of dermatology and plastic surgery – can you tell us a little bit about your background?

I'm a US Board Certified Dermatologist based in suburban Washington, DC. Although I'm American by birth, my family moved to England when I was two months old, and so this is where I grew up and received my education including my masters and medical degrees from Cambridge University. Since my parents were researchers and educators, science and analytical thinking were big parts of my childhood and major topics of conversation at the dinner table! My first opportunity to perform research myself came as a teenager, and it totally captivated me. I had finished high school a little early and was able to work in a biochemistry lab before commencing my medical studies. Research has remained my passion since then, throughout all my subsequent training and specialisation as a dermatologist, and now within my own clinics.

The moment when I realised that I wanted to become a dermatologist was while writing a thesis on molecular biology for my degree in genetics. I became immersed in pivotal techniques for DNA fingerprinting such as the use of restriction fragment length polymorphisms (RFLPs) to identify individuals at risk for inherited skin diseases. I completed my dermatology residency at the University of Chicago, where I discovered my love of minimally invasive aesthetic procedures, and then a medical staff fellowship at the National Institutes of Health where I served as a Lieutenant Commander in the US Public Health Service. Given this background, it came very naturally to me to become involved in educational work, and for my focus to be on elucidating the scientific basis of new and emerging aesthetic technologies.

What has been the best piece of advice that you have received in your career and what advice would you offer to those following in your footsteps?

I can think of two "best pieces of advice" from my early days, both from wise plastic surgeon colleagues while we were working together on educational programmes at the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) Annual Meeting! The first was that, as I started to receive many requests to teach, I should remember that I cannot be everywhere and not to be afraid to say "no" to avoid overextending myself.

The second, related advice was to remember to keep the balance. There are several aspects to this – first, to balance my family life with my career which I've done by declining work that entailed travel until my children were old enough and we felt this was appropriate. Second, I strive for balance in my practice of dermatology. It gives me as much joy to transform a patient's life by diagnosing and removing a skin cancer or treating recalcitrant acne, rosacea, psoriasis or eczema as to apply the latest rejuvenative techniques in injectables, lasers or regenerative medicine to rebalance my patients' outer and inner selves. There is also a beautiful balance between this clinical work and my research, including my service as a Principal Investigator for US FDA and other studies of new technologies. Through my service as an advisor on study design, regulatory submissions and strategic planning to a number of laboratories and research institutes, I am able to help shape the future of aesthetics.

Your field is evolving all the time; what do you think have been the most exciting developments in recent years?

We are indeed living in exciting times! For me, the most exciting part is how relevant science and anatomy have become to



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what we do every day in our clinics, and the burgeoning of evidence-based medicine within our field of aesthetics. A crucial part of my own work as an educator is to make even complex science understandable, and to dedicate my own scientific research to advancing patient safety and results. With our evolving understanding, we can leverage new scientific and anatomical findings to develop and refine aesthetic technologies and techniques that serve our patients better than ever before. I love every aspect of my work, and currently, I am really enjoying the expansion of my research in regenerative medicine, including autologous fat grafting and platelet rich plasma. These are arenas in which much work has already been done, but much remains still. They hold the tantalising promise of empowering us to truly restore ageing or damaged tissue to its previous state, both structurally and functionally.

As a clinician well known for presenting at international meetings do you see this as a vital part of your work?

I consider my work as an educator to be absolutely vital to me and to the patients whom I serve. The key to mastering any field oneself is to be able to teach it to others. When I'm on the podium at a conference, the most exhilarating moment is to see the look of revelation on the faces of my audience after I have communicated and explained quite complex concepts. My priority is to work on behalf of the core aesthetic academies. This includes my service as a Visiting Professor to the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS), and as a Mentor for the ASDS Future Leaders Network to prepare the next generation of leaders in dermatology.

I have also been fortunate to be able to balance my educational work between the core aesthetic academies, including service as a session director, moderator and speaker at the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) and ASDS Annual Meetings, and as keynote speaker at plastic, oculoplastic and facial plastic surgery academies. The other conferences at which I teach are generally those where I serve in an organisational role, such as on the scientific board or committee.

You are organising SEASON 2020 taking place in London in May; can you tell us a bit more about the speakers and what the meeting will focus on?

I'm honoured to be directing SEASON 2020, the third congress of the Global Aesthetics Alliance, together with my esteemed dermatology and plastic surgery colleagues, Dr Tamara Griffiths, Mr Dalvi Humzah and Dr Thomas Rappl. SEASON 2020 will take place from 29-31 May at the Royal College of Physicians in London, and includes a full day of advanced, hands-on anatomical training at Guy's Hospital.

To quote Tamara, a longstanding leader

and advocate for safety standards and appropriate practitioner qualifications, SEASON 2020 is not a trade show. Rather, it's a premier programme of evidence-based, non-commercialised education that is aligned with the curricula of the UK academic societies – the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD), British Cosmetic Dermatology Group (BCDG), British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS), and British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS). The course content of SEASON 2020 maps directly to the components of the General Medical Council-approved curricula for procedural safety, management of complications for non-surgical cosmetic procedures, and facial anatomy. SEASON 2020 affirms its dedication to procedural safety via a partnership with Dalvi Humzah Aesthetic Training to become the first conference in the UK to offer Level 7 certification in facial anatomy for aesthetic medicine, in compliance with the new Health Education England and General Medical Council guidelines.

The primary objectives of SEASON 2020 are to promote evidence-based medicine and scientific excellence. We also strive to address the increasing diversity of our patient populations with respect to ethnicity, gender, culture and age, and how this diversity impacts treatment planning and outcomes. Like the conference directors, all invited speakers are actively engaged in academic teaching and most have academic appointments at universities, teaching hospitals or plastic surgery and dermatology academies. Our faculty have been specifically selected for their commitment to evidence-based medicine, non-promotional and fair-balanced education, and clinical integrity.

The larger initiative of which SEASON

2020 is a part, the Global Aesthetics Alliance (GAA), was founded as a not-for-profit scientific exchange to advance procedural safety and outcomes in aesthetic medicine, identify unmet research needs, and foster responsible media reporting in aesthetics. The final day of SEASON 2020, on 31 May, is the Global Aesthetics Alliance Summit, an interactive forum for debate, dialogue and consensus that brings together physicians, scientists and media reporters to discuss procedural safety, technological innovations and other key topics.

We are proud to announce that SEASON 2020 will support the British Skin Foundation (www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk/) and Scar Free Foundation (<https://scarfree.org.uk/>) through its charitable activities.

Like the previous GAA conferences, we believe that SEASON 2020 is a new way forward in education within our field. We understand and respect that delegates sacrifice time and incur significant expenses to attend conferences. Our aim is to offer training and education that are worthy of this – a stellar global faculty with academic and scientific priorities who will catalyse an unsurpassed, interactive agenda of learning and sharing with no hidden commercial conflicts of interest.



SAVE THE DATE

SEASON 2020
29-31 May 2020
London, UK
<https://season2020.com/>