

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Professor Hesham Saleh

Interviewed by The PMFA Journal

We were delighted to catch up with **Professor Hesham Saleh**, President of the European Academy of Facial Plastic Surgery, about his career.

Can you tell us a little bit about what led you into the field of facial plastic surgery and what have been the highlights so far?

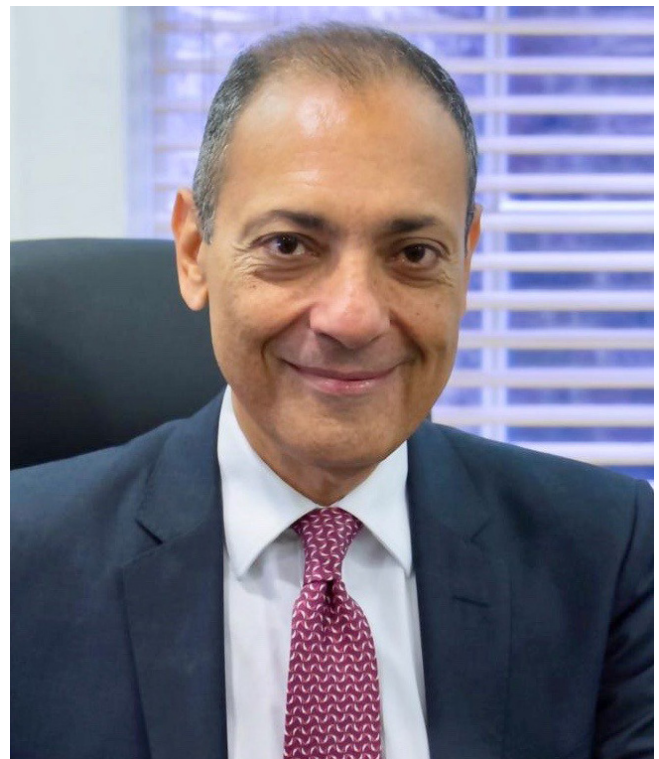
I am the first generation to study medicine in my family. My father was a writer and my mother a lawyer, but I always liked science and they encouraged me. While I was a medical student in Cairo, Egypt, I decided that I wanted to be a surgeon but wasn't sure which specialty! Looking back, I have come to realise that my favourite placement at the time was ENT, although funnily enough I didn't decide on ENT until some years later.

When the family moved to the UK, I had decided that I wanted to be a cardiothoracic surgeon having been fascinated by the achievements of Professor Magdy Yacoub. However, after meeting two family friends, a consultant cardiac surgeon and a consultant ENT surgeon, and looking into the nature of each specialty I became 100% sure that ENT was the one for me. I liked the great variety of surgeries performed and the quality of life but, most importantly, I noticed that all the ENT surgeons I met at the time were really nice! As a senior house officer, it was when I first saw a rhinoplasty performed by Professor Nick Jones in Nottingham that I got hooked on facial plastic surgery and particularly surgery of the nose. I was lucky thereafter as a registrar to be mentored by outstanding surgeons in both Dundee and London and during my facial plastics fellowship in Amsterdam.

The highlight is really the pleasure of doing the surgery and the satisfaction of being able to help so many patients to achieve what they have dreamt of. Teaching is a definitely a highlight, including lecturing all over the world, and mentoring the new generations.

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 have had great advice from all my mentors over the years, and it is difficult to pick just one. Each and every one of them has influenced my career development in one way or another. The first great piece of advice I had on how to progress in ENT was given to me by the late Omar Shaheen from Guy's Hospital. I was later guided and influenced to develop in rhinology and facial plastics by Professor Nick Jones in Nottingham, Mr Simon Hickey in Torbay, Mr Paul White in Dundee, Professor Valerie Lund in Royal National ENT and Mr Ian Mackay in Charing Cross Hospital. During my facial plastics fellowship in Amsterdam I had great mentors in Professor Gilbert Nolst-Trenite and Dr Hade Vuyk. I was also very lucky to join the late Mr Tony Bull in his private practice and he was always



a great inspiration for me to follow.

My personal advice to younger generations is to choose a specialty because they like it and know they will enjoy it. They should always be hungry to learn and never stop even when they are at the top of the ladder.

What one paper or book would you recommend every plastic surgeon should read?

Professor Jacques Joseph from Berlin, who is considered the father of facial plastic surgery in Europe published his famous book *Rhinoplasty, Facial Plastic Surgery and Mammoplasty* in 1931. It is a text of amazing quality and artistry that would inspire any surgeon and give insight on how this specialty has developed. It is commonly said by my peers that before you think you have described a new technique you had better look in Joseph's book because you will find it there! I happen to own a copy of the original German edition that was left to me by the late Mr Bull, and the English translation is available in most medical libraries.

You are, of course, President of the European Academy of Facial Plastic Surgery (EAFPS). Do you enjoy this role and what have been your main aims?

I have myself been a member of the European Academy of Facial Plastic Surgery (EAFPS) since my fellowship in 2001 and have not missed attending or presenting in any of its conferences since then. I was voted as president of the Academy in 2017 and started my role in September 2019. The Academy is on its 43rd anniversary and has more than 1200 members. I enjoy every aspect of this position especially working in a team of outstanding colleagues, being able to guide and teach other surgeons and to be able to influence the development of facial plastic surgery, not only in Europe but worldwide. I set up my aims when I was elected to get the members more involved, create a more democratic process for elections of officers, increase diversity and expand membership outside Europe. Soon after I was elected, I started working on modernising the EAFPS by-laws to improve the structure of governance and to create inclusivity and equality. After one year as president, I am very happy with what we have achieved in all of these aspects, and we continue to progress.

Of course, the current COVID-19 pandemic has made life very different for everyone; how is the EAFPS supporting its members during the crisis?

We have been busy during the pandemic! On 2 April this year I wrote to our members explaining that we had to take the difficult

decision of cancelling the EAFPS Annual Meeting because of COVID-19. I also wrote "however, education and exchange of ideas shouldn't stop, and we will continue providing these by alternative means". We started two to three weekly webinars in mid-April, but we didn't know how the reception to these would be as it was a fairly new thing in facial plastics. We were pleasantly surprised by their popularity and continued until the end of July to end up with a total of 28 webinars. We also made their recordings available to all our members on the EAFPS website. On 19 and 20 September we arranged the first and largest virtual meeting in facial plastic surgery with four parallel sessions and 140 lectures. This attracted 1100 participants, and we are very pleased with its success, that far exceeded our expectations. In May, I led an EAFPS task force that published a peer reviewed article on recovery of facial plastic surgery after the pandemic and co-authored an article with our facial aesthetics focus group on recovery of non-surgical facial procedures.

You are known for being very dedicated to training and education; do you see this as an important part of your work and are you continuing this virtually?

Teaching and guiding younger generations from medical students to junior consultants is the one aspect of my job that I enjoy most. I have worked closely with the Imperial College as Director of undergraduate studies and Specialty Choice Placement for ENT. I also run a Royal College of Surgeons accredited post CCT fellowship. The COVID-19 crisis has

opened our eyes to virtual teaching. It will definitely form a large and an integral part of medical education from now on. The EAFPS was possibly the first to arrange a full virtual conference that attracted a very a large attendance at a fraction of the cost of any normal conference. However, there will always be a need for practical and hands on courses, and most importantly, human social interaction cannot be replaced by virtual meetings.

And finally, if you have any spare time, how do you like to relax?

My wife and I love to travel, and I enjoy regular swimming, something I have been deprived of during the pandemic. My old hobby of playing the guitar is always there but my busy life interferes with it. During the pandemic, I promised myself that I will re-start and have just ordered another one of my dream guitars!

Many thanks for your time!