

# Dr Portia Goldsmith

BY THE PMFA JOURNAL

We spoke to Portia Goldsmith about her career in dermatology, her ascension to the Presidency of the RSM Dermatology Section, and inspirations through her career.



**Dr Portia Goldsmith,**  
Dermatologist.

## Can you tell us a little bit about what led you into the field of dermatology?

I think the skin is fascinating. It is the biggest organ in the body and is so complex and clever. It can also go wrong in so many different ways and cause a lot of misery, as I was to discover myself. I was working as a busy medical registrar and suddenly developed a horrible itchy rash all over. I was so grateful to the dermatologist who was able to diagnose what I had and to make me better and I thought: why not dermatology?

## As a dermatologist, do you have a subspecialty?

I do paediatric dermatology clinics which I find very rewarding as there is so much you can do to help and the kids make me smile. How can you not enjoy treating any patient who wants to talk to you about dinosaurs and is thrilled to be given a sticker!

But actually, I am very much a Jack of all trades. I do contact dermatitis, general dermatology, emergency dermatology, skin

cancer and a lot of medical dermatology so I am one of a dying breed of dermatologists who does everything. Nowadays, dermatologists tend to subspecialise. I really enjoy the variety that my specialty offers and the cross-section of patients I meet. The recent advances in biologics make medical dermatology very exciting as there is so much more we can do to help our patients nowadays.

## Who has inspired you during your career?

Lots of people. It started with John Burton and his book Lecture Notes in Dermatology. He wrote so well. It was the first medical textbook to make me laugh out loud in the library. Later I got to work with him in Bristol as a trainee and he was a brilliant clinician. I have always found those dermatologists who are excellent clinicians the most inspiring. In Bristol I was also lucky enough to work with Cameron Kennedy. In London I had fantastic bosses who taught me well; Richard Staughton, Sallie Neill, Gerald Levene, Neil Smith, David McGibbon and Richard Rycroft to name a few. Ultimately, however, it is the patients that keep me going and inspire me to continue working. They are often stoical and brave and endure so much. As you look after them you learn of their difficult lives and if you can help them, it makes it worthwhile. Dermatology patients are often very grateful to us despite everything and that is humbling.

## You are just about to take on the position of President of the RSM Dermatology Section – many congratulations! What would you like to achieve during your time in the role?

I would like to make our meetings once again a clinical highlight of the dermatologist's month.

## Would you suggest more of your colleagues become involved in the RSM?

In dermatology that goes without saying.

## Do you enjoy being involved in training newer members of the profession?

Yes I'm good at teaching and explaining things. Teaching is one of my passions. I would like to hand over as much knowledge as I can before I go.

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

I grow fruit, vegetables and flowers on my allotment, make preserves and read lots.

Many thanks to Portia for speaking to us.