

Dr Tristan Mehta

We were pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Dr Tristan Mehta, Founder and CEO of Harley Academy, a leading postgraduate training provider of higher education in aesthetic medicine within the UK.

What led you to choose a career in the world of aesthetic medicine?

Aesthetic medicine was a fantastic overlap between my clinical background and entrepreneurial side. I wanted to add value to the sector by trying to solve the biggest problem I could see. This was that aesthetics education standards are fragmented and inconsistent, and ultimately not fit for purpose. Patient safety was always at the forefront of my mind. Through adopting the government's recommendations for education, i.e. developing a Level 7 injectables qualification, I set to work on defining this standard.

With the experience you have now, what reflections can you take away from the years you spent in training?

Many healthcare professionals still see aesthetic medicine as a quick swap which will allow them to boost their earning potential. They think it will allow them to rapidly take back more autonomy in their careers. Whilst this is definitely achievable, it's more important now than ever to set the right expectations and mindset. Aesthetic medicine should be seen as a specialty training programme like other fields within medicine. There are no shortcuts to becoming a truly proficient aesthetics specialist who can provide comprehensive and holistic treatment plans to patients. My primary reflection is that, to really stand out and forge a successful medical aesthetics career, a long-term mindset is required. Too many practitioners give up too soon. This is because their expectations are out of balance with the learning curve and the fulfilling journey ahead.

At what point in your career did you decide to enter an educational capacity and begin founding the Harley Academy?

I completed my foundation training as a doctor and then worked within emergency medicine. This was whilst undergoing my Diploma in Skin Ageing and Aesthetic Medicine from the University of Manchester. From here, I could really start to develop the curriculum and vision for Harley Academy. The great thing about working as a healthcare professional is that we can flexibly take on work whilst supporting the transition into full-time aesthetic medicine. It's been an extremely challenging journey with many lessons along the way, but I am grateful for every moment.

Harley Academy is among very few of its kind in the UK. What need would you say it meets for healthcare professionals and what were your initial thoughts when identifying this need?

Healthcare professionals are looking for an ethical, structured framework to continue their higher education, in a format which is similar to their existing medical training. We have avoided running



short toxin and filler courses and instead opted to focus our entire business around our one-year Level 7 Diploma in injectables. It's a huge undertaking requiring over 60 team members to support the trainees who enrol with us. This is largely due to the importance we place on our trainees having one-to-one mentoring where they treat their own patients from start to finish every time. However, I believe there is no comparison between the experience a student has at Harley Academy and other providers. This is our entire focus, with dedicated teams from our education, assessment, student support, and employed clinical faculty.

In the global forum, there is a lot of discussion around the validity and effectiveness of some aesthetic medicine practices. To what extent does the wellbeing and safety of both patients and practitioners feature into your thinking at Harley Academy?

Patient safety has always been at the centre of our work, and increasingly all of our aesthetics education is mapped to cutting-

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edge research and evidence. Our ethical principles underscore everything we do at Harley Academy. We believe injectors should:

- Be able to manage their own complications
- Have clinical experience prior to training, including independently overseeing patient care and managing outcomes
- Be overseen and registered under a professional statutory regulatory body.

This means that our trainees are accountable, and can independently practice within the privatised system of aesthetic medicine. This is what informs our entry criteria, but also informs our overall messaging and intended impact on the sector.

Lastly, imagine you had made other choices in life and they had landed you in a completely different career. What do you think it would be and why?

I always loved working with my hands and was drawn to anaesthesia during my medical training. Having said that, my work in managing and leading an education business is increasingly a very fulfilling part of my week. I can see no other future other than staying focused on our mission and driving Harley Academy to ultimately set the standard for aesthetic medicine education, worldwide.