



David J. Goldberg, MD, JD:

Medicine, Law and Business Success

By Abby Penning

David J. Goldberg, MD, JD, a cosmetic dermatologist based in New Jersey who also has offices in New York and Florida, clearly has a zeal for life.

“Everything I see is beautiful—the sky, the trees. It’s easy to be unhappy in life, and no one’s life is perfect, but I always work to make sure I keep my view as the cup being half-full as opposed to half-empty,” he says. “I take my work seriously, but I don’t take anything in life too seriously. You can’t let life kill you.”

It’s an attitude you might expect from a boy who grew up in Arizona with little money who became one of the industry’s most widely regarded figures as the founder and director of his successful practice, Skin Laser & Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey; a leader in the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, the International Society for Dermatologic Surgery, the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery (ASLMS), the American College of Mohs Surgery and the Dermatological Society of New Jersey, among others; a law professor at Fordham University in New York; and a physician who has garnered a host of accolades, including being the

recipient of the ASLMS’s first Leon Goldman Memorial Award, which recognizes contributions in clinical laser research, laser patient care and medical laser education. And his great attitude, combined with his long list of accomplishments, keeps him driving full-steam ahead.

From Arizona to Yale and beyond

“From the time I was about six years old, I knew I wanted to be a doctor,” Goldberg explains of his early medical ambitions. He met the founder of the Arizona Heart Institute, Edward B. Diethrich, MD, an open heart surgeon who treated Goldberg’s father when Goldberg was young, and Dr. Diethrich helped guide his career. “He took a liking to me and recognized that maybe I had some abilities beyond my then-current career path, which was probably to be a truck driver,” Goldberg explains with a laugh. “He ended up taking me under his wing, mentored me and eventually helped me get into Yale’s medical school.”

Spurred on to pursue his dream, Goldberg first attended Yeshiva University in New York, graduating in 1976, then enrolled in the Yale School of Medicine, where he intended to follow in the footsteps of his mentor. "I was going to be an open heart surgeon too, but then my wife and I had our first daughter, and the time commitment to cardiothoracic surgery was so great—I decided that I wanted a life in addition to my medical career," he says.

Graduating cum laude, Goldberg earned his medical degree from Yale in 1980 and decided to focus his medical prowess on dermatology. While his family—which today includes his wife, three daughters and one son—continued to grow, he completed a dermatology residency and dermatologic surgical fellowship at New York University's Langone Medical Center. "When I was doing my training there, I realized how much I missed the surgery part of medicine," Goldberg states. "So I got involved in Mohs surgery for skin cancers, and from there started doing more work in a new field which, at that time, was in its infancy—laser surgery and cosmetic dermatology."

The combination of dermatology and surgery was a perfect fit for Goldberg. "I already knew I loved surgery, but I quickly realized I loved the physics of lasers, and I enjoyed interacting with patients. Communication is definitely one of the major components of a successful practice of medicine, especially in cosmetic work, so this all sort of naturally evolved into the work I've been doing now for more than 25 years," he explains.

Making a name

Starting his cosmetic dermatology practice in Hackensack, New Jersey, in 1985, Goldberg found himself immersed in a field that was rapidly gaining popularity. Through the years, in addition to running his own practice, he began training other medical professionals in cosmetic surgery and the use of lasers, as well as getting involved in academic work, eventually being named a clinical professor of dermatology and director of laser research at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, a clinical professor of dermatology and chief of dermatologic surgery at the University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey, New Jersey Medical School in Newark, and chief of dermatology at Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack.

He also got involved in conducting studies and testing for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for everything from facial fillers to cosmeceuticals. He continued his work with skin laser treatments, as well as offering dermatologic procedures for everything from scar renewal to cosmetic surgery, including laser resurfacing, skin rejuvenation, facial fillers and neurotoxins, and hair removal procedures, which has led to the expansion of his practice, as well as the creation of relationships, working and otherwise, with a variety of colleagues.

In addition, Goldberg went back to school to pursue an additional love that medicine had edged out for a time—law. "In college, I enjoyed both biology and political science. Most people would choose either medicine or

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Quick Facts

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Skin Laser & Surgery Specialists
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Specialty: Dermatology

Affiliations: Chief of dermatology at Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack, NJ; director of laser research in the department of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York; and chief of dermatologic surgery at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey—New Jersey Medical School in Newark, NJ

Businesses: Director of the Skin Laser & Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey; co-director of Sanctuary Medical Aesthetic Center in Boca Raton, FL

Staff: 60 staff members, ranging from physicians to physician assistants, to estheticians, to nursing staff to secretaries

Future endeavors: Looking at the interaction between age management, total body health and skin care



Goldberg's practice, Skin Laser & Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey, uses cutting-edge equipment and techniques to offer patients a variety of cosmetic and medical skin treatments, and it relies on tried-and-true, results-driven methods to keep its loyal clientele coming back for more.

law. I wanted to do both," Goldberg explains. "Because I wanted to be a doctor since childhood, it was inevitable that medical school started first." However, in 1992, while still maintaining his flourishing medical practice, he enrolled at Fordham University's law school. "I did all my course work and graduated in 1996. Then when I sat to take the dreaded New York bar exam, I asked myself, 'What did I do all this for? I love the practice of medicine.'"

After passing both the New York and New Jersey bar exams, Goldberg didn't want to have worked for his law degree only to not use it. "During the next couple of weeks I pondered the issue and found myself thinking about what I love about both medicine and the law," he recalls. "Being a doer, I put together a law school course curriculum, and with that in hand, I went to the dean's office and told him, 'I know I just graduated, but I've put together this program and I'd like you to take a look at it and make me a law professor this fall,'—and it worked. I've been teaching a course in health care law at Fordham University School of Law ever since." In addition to teaching, Goldberg also combines his legal and medical knowledge to write a legal column for *Dermatology Times*, saying, "I'm living my passion by being able to combine these two professions."

Continued growth

His medical career continues to thrive as well. "Early on, I recognized that medicine was changing and that the solo medical practice was starting to die," Goldberg explains. "Luckily, I've had the opportunity to meet and work with so many great people in my field, and through that and partnering with other great dermatologists and physicians, I have been able to open and run three dermatology offices in New York City and New Jersey."

Additionally, his fourth office—Sanctuary Medical Aesthetic Center—opened a few years ago in Boca Raton, Florida, as part of a collaboration with his friend, Jason Pozner, MD, a plastic surgeon. Goldberg's love of travel, which inspired him to get his medical license in several states, including Florida, found him always eager to experience a new place. "Pozner said, 'Just come down here and see if you like it,'" Goldberg remembers. "When I did, I started going back every other month, and soon our name was getting known well enough that he and I opened a space next door to his plastic surgery office. We've really worked to build this combination cosmetic surgery-dermatology practice together."

Goldberg also plans to take this plastic surgery-dermatology model to Boston, where he'll partner with another area plastic surgeon.

He sees the crossover of cosmetic dermatology and cosmetic and plastic surgery as a growing part of aesthetic medicine, saying, "They overlap more and more not only intellectually, but also economically. And I also find the opportunity to work with my peers in this way quite fun."

Additionally, Goldberg sees the continued growth of noninvasive procedures in the industry and people seeking age management treatments at a younger age. "It's a way to help people feel better and live healthier," he explains.

On top of his game

Despite the fact that Goldberg is now the director of multiple practice locations, overseeing many employees, patients and procedures, and has a laundry list of professional commitments, he likes to stay involved in nearly aspect of his business. "A lot of doctors feel like getting patients is the hardest part of the business, but I feel like if you're good at what you do and you are nice to people, you'll develop a following," he notes. Instead, Goldberg often feels dealing with employees can be the toughest part of his practice. "Whether you are working with other physicians or staff members in your office, you have to make sure they have an outlook and philosophy that meshes with your's and your practice's," he says. "I don't expect my employees to, from the start, always know everything about cosmetic dermatology—they can train for that. But to have a good attitude and be willing to learn, that is something you can't teach."

Goldberg's eager spirit and can-do attitude also has led to his involvement in cosmetic dermatology organizations worldwide, as well as co-directing dermatology meetings in Europe to help bring together leaders in the field from around the globe. Additionally, he's contributed to medical textbooks, written numerous scientific papers, and co-authored, with Eva M. Harriott, PhD, two skin care books for the consumer market—*Light Years Younger* (Capital Lifestyles, 2003) and *Secrets of Great Skin* (Innova Publishing, 2003).

And he seems ceaselessly waiting for his next challenge, commenting that he intends to never retire. "I'm inspired all the time," he says, and with his buoyant attitude, immense knowledge and drive to succeed, it's clear that medical aesthetics won't be the only beneficiary of Goldberg's future endeavors. ●●