

SPOTLIGHT ON: WILL KIRBY, DO, FAOCD

In dermatology, we are fortunate to have many insightful practitioners and great teachers and mentors. Some are bright stars in our special universe — others unsung heroes. All of these colleagues have much to share from wisdom to humor to insights into dermatology and life. This column allows us to gain insight from these practitioners and learn more about them.



Having appeared on more than 35 different television shows, board-certified dermatologist Dr. Will Kirby is most frequently recognized in the dermatological community for his multiple appearances on “Dr. 90210” and “The Doctors.” Some of his other TV appearances have included “The Young & The Restless,” “Regis & Kelly,” “The Talk,” “LA Ink,” “The Real

Housewives of Orange County” and “Chelsea Lately.” He currently serves as the spokesman for Neutrogena Dermatology and often appears on QVC and The Shopping Channel. He also serves as a clinical assistant professor of dermatology at Western University of Health Sciences and Nova Southeastern University. Widely considered to be the leading authority on the art and science of laser tattoo removal, Dr. Kirby serves as the medical director of Dr. Tattoff, Inc (www.DrTattoff.com), which is headquartered in Beverly Hills, CA.

Q. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE DERMATOLOGY?

A. There is something very primal and very rewarding about a field of work where you can use both your brain and your hands on a daily basis. Dermatology is one of the few fields that allows you to be both cerebral and technical.

Q. WHAT PART OF YOUR WORK GIVES YOU THE MOST PLEASURE?

A. Teaching medical students, interns and residents is extremely fulfilling for me. I allow very few rotations but those who do spend time with me get a tremendous amount of individualized attention that I believe they find very helpful. In fact, I’m very proud of the fact that both students who rotated with me last year matched with their top residency choice. I strongly urge my colleagues to get involved in post-graduate teaching, as it is a great way to keep your skills sharp and shape the future of the profession!

Q. ARE AN UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF THE HUMANITIES IMPORTANT IN DERMATOLOGY AND WHY?

A. From disease nomenclature derived from Latin and Greek to the visual

patterns associated with skin manifestations, the humanities are an integral part of our profession. Even a dermatological differential diagnoses is philosophical in nature! The most successful dermatologists I know acknowledge that there is a true artistry to our profession. Moreover, to me personally, the essence of dermatology is an equal meld of the humanistic study with the natural sciences.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST REGRET?

A. I spent entirely too much of my early life in the sun. For many, many years I worked and played outdoors and, in the interest of full disclosure, I’ve paid the price for youthful indiscretion as I had a basal cell carcinoma removed via Mohs surgery a few years back. I’m obviously much more cautious these days, but I regret being so foolhardy in my youth.

Q. WHICH GROUP OF PATIENTS HAD THE MOST EFFECT ON YOUR WORK AND WHY?

A. I do a tremendous amount of tattoo removal and I often see teenage males with facial tattoos. They often have an extremely difficult time stay-

ing in school, finding employment and building new friendships because they are judged by their physical appearance. Keep in mind, these young men aren’t bad people; they just don’t have a strong familial support system and simply made a bad decision. Once their ink is removed, they lose the social stigmata they are experiencing and can move on with their lives. Seeing the life transformation take place by providing laser services to these individuals has a huge positive effect on my staff and me.

Q. IF YOU HAD NOT BECOME A DERMATOLOGIST, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO DO?

A. One field I’ve had a moderate level of success in is entertainment, and, although I thoroughly enjoy it, I can’t say that I would ever want to have my livelihood depend on that industry. It is an extremely unpredictable career path. That said, the beauty of the dermatological profession is that, if you manage your practice effectively, you can enjoy a satisfying lifestyle that is not necessarily available to other medical specialties. My practice allows me to lecture, teach, write and even ap-

pear on medical television programming. I love yoga, basketball and the beach, but the bottom line for me is this: I may never win a sanctioned surfing contest, but I still get to live my dream of being a professional surfer on the weekends!

Q. WHAT IS THE GREATEST POLITICAL DANGER IN THE FIELD OF DERMATOLOGY?

A. A point of frustration for me personally, and I'm sure many of my colleagues share this view, is that patients, other non-dermatology healthcare professionals and even other physician specialists don't have a real grasp on how academic and complex the field of dermatology truly is. With the current downturn in the economy, many medical providers find themselves dabbling in dermatology treatments with, predictably, less than ideal results. In turn, the dermatology community responds by petitioning the local and national regulatory bodies for the creation of new rules in what is already an over-regulated profession. The word "doctor" originates from the latin verb "doce-re," which means "to teach" and, thus, I would like to see an effort to educate both the public and the healthcare community about the expertise that dermatologists have. I'm very optimistic that, through teaching, the dermatology community will continue to experience great success in the future! ■



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Dr. Barankin is a dermatologist based in Toronto, Canada. He is author-editor of six books in dermatology and is widely published in the dermatology and humanities literature.

He is also co-editor of Dermanities (dermanities.com), an online journal devoted to the humanities as they relate to dermatology.



THE DERMATOLOGIST WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Do you have a question or a comment about something you read in *The Dermatologist*? Or, do you have an idea for a potential article?

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