



Practice

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in Motion

A commitment to patient education and continuing involvement in all aspects of medical aesthetics—in particular the use of lasers—have made Paul M. Friedman, MD, a well-known figure in the world of dermatologic laser surgery and cosmetic dermatology. His Houston-based DermSurgery Laser Center features more than 20 lasers plus an adjunct Mohs and dermatologic surgery center where staff members are encouraged to create a climate of top-notch patient care and satisfaction. Today Dr. Friedman continues to expand his expertise beyond clinical care and research to teaching, charitable outreach and a new career as an author.



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In many areas of the country, doctors who perform elective aesthetic procedures are taking long, hard looks at their practices. With prospective patients' investment portfolios shrinking, practitioners are worried about business slumps for the first time since the fledgling medical aesthetics industry began its steady climb.

In Houston, however, Paul M. Friedman, MD, director of the DermSurgery Laser Center, is cautiously optimistic. “Texas has not yet been affected by the current economic decline,” he reports. “Patients in this region continue to seek the latest advances in aesthetic dermatologic treatment.” In fact, notes Dr. Friedman, if anything, patients are more interested than ever in less invasive aesthetic procedures as an alternative to more costly facial plastic surgeries. But the success of The DermSurgery Laser Center is based on much more than a roll of the economic dice.

Emphasis on Patient Care

Dr. Friedman's parallel Mohs surgery practice, where he works with Leonard H. Goldberg, MD, continues to thrive, and both physicians offer a long list of credentials that put both medical needs and aesthetic patients at ease. Dr. Friedman studied dermatology at the New York University School of Medicine, where he served as chief resident and was awarded the Husik Prize for dermatologic research. He received advanced training in dermatologic laser surgery and Mohs micrographic surgery at the Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York and was a recipient of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Young Investigator's Writing Competition Award. He has been a featured speaker for the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery and the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery. In April 2009, he will co-chair the Cutaneous Laser Surgery Section at the Annual Conference of the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery in National Harbor, Maryland.

While Dr. Friedman's credentials are impressive, it is his approachable personality and emphasis on patient care and education that foster loyalty and growth. His patients refer to him simply as “Dr. Paul.” While his Center's website, www.friedmanmd.net, offers thorough explanations of every procedure and delivers frequent invitations to email the staff directly with questions or to request additional information.

The site also contains a blog which Dr. Friedman updates monthly with current practice news. “Your website should serve as a valuable resource to patients, both before and after their initial consultation or treatment,” he says.

In the DermSurgery offices, Dr. Friedman's clinical staff of seven—a research fellow, physician's assistant, registered nurse, receptionist and three medical assistants—are encour-

aged to embrace a culture of accessibility and respect. Key to that, Dr. Friedman believes, is thorough and realistic patient education. “I always emphasize the importance of patient education,” he says. “Patients must be provided with realistic expectations and have a complete understanding of the scope of their treatment plans. Many of the laser procedures that we perform, for example, require several treatments, sometimes with a combination of devices, and patients may not see results immediately.”

Patient results are tracked through before-and-after photography, which Dr. Friedman considers an indispensable aspect of patient education. “Your staff should take several quality photographs at every patient visit,” he says. “Standardization of patient before-and-after photos is important in a cosmetic practice. These images are not only helpful in tracking patient progress, but they're also useful in preparing lectures and seminars.”

To ensure safe care and the best results, Dr. Friedman evaluates and treats each patient personally. “I am an advocate for the importance of seeking not only the right treatment but the right physician as well,” he says.

Taking the Lead

In addition to word-of-mouth marketing, it's Dr. Friedman's reputation as an industry leader that drives patients to his practice. He is well known for setting new standards in patient care and for participating in research on the latest laser procedures. “Laser surgery is a rapidly evolving field, and I think it's important to stay abreast of emerging technologies and best practices,” he says.

DermSurgery is equipped with more than 20 different lasers because Dr. Friedman believes that a successful laser practice depends on the availability of multiple devices to treat a wide variety of conditions and skin types. He was one of the first physicians in the state of Texas to offer fractionated CO₂ and erbium technologies. The facility's reputation is so excellent, in fact, that since 2003 the Laser Center has funded a highly sought-after, one-year laser surgery fellowship. Under this program, fellows receive extensive exposure to a wide range of dermatologic laser surgery and Mohs surgery techniques. The fellow also has the opportunity to participate in direct patient care and clinical studies. “Our fellows have been prolific,” he

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says proudly, “contributing significantly to the medical literature.”

The fellowship is just one aspect of Dr. Friedman’s teaching pursuits. He is clinical assistant professor at the University of Texas Medical School, department of dermatology, and a clinical assistant professor of dermatology at the Weill Cornell Medical College at The Methodist Hospital in Houston. He is also on staff at Texas Children’s Hospital and Memorial Hermann Hospital. Thanks to his broad perspective, his students are well equipped for the field. “My residents receive an overview of advanced techniques, emerging technologies and the role of combination therapies to optimize aesthetic efficacy,” he says.

Dr. Friedman believes fractionated delivery systems are among the new technologies of particular importance. “I am optimistic about future research to explore the effectiveness of fractionated technologies to deliver different wavelengths and to treat new indications,” he says. “I’m also looking forward to the results of investigations currently underway evaluating the synergistic benefit of combined fractionated technology and radiofrequency.” What’s more, he’s certain that the future of laser technology will include the optimization of photodynamic therapy for both medical and cosmetic indications, possibly even serving as a chemopreventative tool for transplant patients.

One of Dr. Friedman’s avenues for both personal and professional growth is his ongoing involvement in clinical trials. He is currently overseeing:

- A sebum study investigating the effectiveness of a modified 1450nm diode laser for moderate to severe acne.
- A sebum study investigating the effectiveness of the 1450nm diode laser for control of sebum production in patients with oily skin.
- An actinic keratoses study to investigate the effectiveness of the Fraxel re:store laser for this condition.
- A cellulite study assessing the effectiveness of the VelaShape laser in the reduction of cellulite on the thighs.

“I think it’s important to optimize and test new leading-edge technologies in order to find solutions to a variety of skin conditions,” he says.



The DermSurgery Laser Center waiting room is unpretentious and offers several patient education options.

Reaching Out

Currently, Dr. Friedman is expanding his career in a new direction. He has published more than 50 medical articles and book chapters, and has been featured regularly in *The New York Times*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Glamour*, *The Houston Chronicle* and regularly featured on more than 30 news programs on the Fox, ABC, CBS and NBC networks. *H Texas Magazine* named him one of Houston’s top doctors in 2005 and again in 2006. All of this led to his current project—*Beautiful Skin Revealed*, an educational book for patients considering laser and dermatologic surgery. *New Beauty Magazine*’s Sadow Media Corporation is publishing Dr. Friedman’s book with release scheduled for Spring 2009. Dr. Friedman explains that the book is an “excellent resource guide of aesthetic procedures with insights on therapy from the patient’s perspective. This book will also serve as a useful educational tool for graduating residents interested in building a laser practice.”

While industry and practice growth are high on Dr. Friedman’s list of priorities, he’s also a proponent of using his skills to help those in need. He previously served as Chair of the Public Service Committee of the American Society of Dermatologic Surgery, and the Houston Dermatologic Society’s

Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Campaign. He currently participates in the American Society of Dermatologic Surgery’s Skin Care Outreach Empowers Survivors (SCORES) Program, which provides free treatment to victims of domestic violence who have separated themselves from abusive relationships. “This program allows me to help erase the physical scars of abuse,” he says. One of his long-term goals is to establish a charitable foundation to help children struggling with dermatologic issues. Based on his track record of focus and discipline, it’s likely that before long, the underserved kids of Houston will have “Dr. Paul” on their side. ▀

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