

2018 ASDS International Preceptorship
Dr. Karen Abigail Santos (Manila, Philippines)
Mentor: Dr. Ronald Shelton (Lasers and Skin Surgery Center of New York)

Dermatologic surgery has always been of great interest to me since residency training. Through the International Preceptorship Program of the ASDS, I am fortunate to have been mentored by Dr. Ronald Shelton who was not only passionate in his field of specialty but also dedicated in teaching.

From pre-procedural instructions to the actual Mohs surgery up to post-operative care, I was able to observe how different techniques and strategies are used to produce the highest cure rate, minimize scarring and prevent infections and other complications especially when cases were challenging. It was not just about getting the work done, but rather providing the best clinical, surgical and cosmetic outcome for the patient. Dr. Shelton explained to me the rationale behind these techniques as well as wound closure designs including flaps and grafts in relation to the anatomy and function of the skin and its adjacent structures. I also had the opportunity to discuss the histopathological findings with him and correlate these with any skin changes we see along the surgical margins. I am grateful that my weeks of preceptorship allowed me to see the patients also in their post-operative follow-ups and to observe how the skin recovers and how wounds and grafts heal in different stages. Aside from consults, the afternoons were spent in cosmetic treatments where I was able to further enhance my knowledge in use of lasers, including safety precautions, and application of neuromodulators and soft-tissue fillers to have natural-looking results. Dr. Shelton encouraged questions and discussions of all cases seen and this greatly facilitated more learning.

But aside from being an expert in dermatologic surgery, Dr. Shelton knows how to listen to his patients and address their concerns. I learned a lot from how he interact and communicate with them from their first consult to the actual procedure up to follow-up care. I admire how he involves the patient in the treatment process by explaining to them their disease, benefits and risks of the procedure, possible outcomes as well as proper wound care. He knows how to make them feel comfortable. And I have witnessed first-hand how proper doctor-patient communication can greatly ease a patient's anxiety, manage unrealistic expectations and improve overall treatment outcome.

Not only was I able to learn the art of Mohs surgery, cosmetic procedures and patient communication, but I was also able to get tips from Dr. Shelton on how to successfully run a clinic, from the day-to-day operation to effective training and management of staff. He was very professional in dealing with the nurses, technicians and staff and respects everyone's contribution and suggestions in improving the team and hence, the quality of service provided to patients.

I am indeed deeply grateful to the ASDS for this wonderful experience and to Dr. Ronald Shelton, his patients and the whole team of doctors, nurses and staff of Laser and Skin Surgery Center of New York for the valuable lessons and for warmly welcoming me into their clinic. I can definitely say that I am leaving New York City possessing not only new and advanced knowledge in dermatologic surgery but also beautiful memories.