

the **private practice**
magazine

The quarterly management magazine for health care professionals

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Patient Communication

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An integrated approach

BRISBANE SKIN and **WESTSIDE DERMATOLOGY** – a practice profile.

All through medical school, Dr Shobhan Manoharan had the ambition to become a plastic surgeon. When he graduated in 1999 from the University of Queensland, he negotiated a highly sought-after plastic surgical resident rotation at the Royal Brisbane Hospital that came with one caveat; it was twinned with a term in dermatology.

Call it fate or opportunity, this signalled an interesting change in path. “I enjoyed the dermatology component even more than the

plastic surgery. I loved the mix of ‘Medical, Surgical and Cosmetic’ in dermatology, and to this day that remains one of the mottos for my practices. The opportunity to work with lasers and devices also appealed to me greatly.”

Dr Manoharan completed his dermatology training in Brisbane and the United Kingdom, and in 2011 became a co-director of the Westside Dermatology (WD) Group, Brisbane.

BRISBANE SKIN

wd westside dermatology

Is it a group practice – how does this work?

Over the following 4 years, Dr Manoharan and his co-director, Dr Davin Lim, have grown WD to become the largest private practice dermatology centre in Queensland, and one of the largest laser units in the country. Along the way, they have created offshoot dermatology sub-speciality clinics, such as Sweat Free Clinics, The Psoriasis Institute and Skin By Derms teledermatology service. WD is a team of 10 consultants, 2 nurse practitioners, 8 nurses, 15 support staff (including a administration manager and a full-time marketing manager).

Do you have employed doctors and paraprofessionals – how do you maintain quality control, and what kind of remuneration formula do you use?

The consultants pay a percentage of their billings as a service fee, and in return we provide them with the facilities, equipment and highly trained nursing and support staff.

All our procedures are either performed by consultants or specialist dermatology registered nurses. We have rigorous selection criteria for staff. Staff selection is key,

and careful consideration must be taken in regards to what individuals can bring to the team, and their interactions within.

We often select nurses who have extensive dermatology, plastic surgery or laser expertise, or employ young enthusiastic nurses who can be trained to become high-level specialist dermatology nurses by our consultants.

Ongoing professional development for all staff, nursing and support, are provided in-house, by external agencies and through courses and conferences. This has been a core philosophy since foundation and ensures that all staff is well-educated and up-to-date with advances in medical services and technology – this is particularly important in a rapidly evolving specialist cosmetic and laser practice.

We are particularly interested in your practice model and the integration of different forms of dermatology under the one roof – medical, surgical, cosmetic.

The theory behind Westside Dermatology is straightforward: build on the foundations of established medical dermatologists, add consultants with a varied range of

medical and surgical skill-sets, then expand into laser and cosmetic practice. Another key component is the presence of nurse led clinics both medical (e.g. psoriasis, hyperhidrosis, acne) and cosmetic (egg. laser hair removal, tattoo removal, basic cosmetic consultations).

The idea is to find niches in the market that can be serviced by your business, then putting in the appropriate, trained individuals to staff these at various price-points to suit the market.

For instance, a consultation with a psoriasis nurse practitioner is at a lower price-point than a dermatologist, but then patients may have access to specialist advice, initial assessment and treatment plans, and if necessary then have the opportunity to be triaged to higher level care either privately at the practice, or referred to the public hospitals (where many of our dermatologists also consult).

“When we started off, the wait-list to see a dermatologist varied from 6 weeks to 6 months. What we set about to do was change the traditional model of private practice dermatology, to have shorter wait-lists, and improve accessibility.”

Disruptive models in medicine



PRACTICE PROFILE

are often frowned upon, but Westside Dermatology embraced the concept, and set up rapid access services and invested in ethical marketing.

“We strive hard to maintain and expand our General Practice referral base, by providing an efficient, high-quality consulting service, and by being involved in GP education and interaction.

“However, we are well aware of the importance and the shift towards patient self-referrals also. Patients are more discerning, have done their research, and want to pick the provider of their choice. This is where marketing the practice is vital, and we do so enthusiastically in all forms of media, but within AHPRA guidelines.”

Following the 4 years of growth of WD and after overseeing the structural change of 2014, Dr Manoharan has decided to experiment with another project in the heart of Brisbane City, a boutique dermatology centre known simply as Brisbane Skin.

Brisbane Skin is a novel concept in specialist dermatology dreamed up and created by Dr Manoharan and partner Dr Patricia Sutcliffe, Managing Director of the new practice.

The practice is a state-of-the-art facility offering medical, surgical and cosmetic dermatology in the heart of Brisbane in a brand new, luxurious environment. Natural elements have been generously incorporated into the design, to provide a welcoming environment aimed at making the entire patient experience relaxing and enjoyable. There is Spotted Gum timber throughout all areas of the practice, mixed with textured walls and feature lighting from the waiting room to the surgery.

This practice also differs from most other medical practices in that there is no traditional reception desk. Patients are greeted upon arrival and individually seated in the waiting room with iPads that are used for updating the patient's medical records. All other reception duties, such as answering phones, making bookings and general paperwork are done in a completely separate area of the practice that is not visible to patients, to provide as much relaxation and tranquility to patient areas as possible.

All patient consultations aim to provide an extra level of service, whether for a consult with a dermatologist or to see a nurse. This is achieved through staff training in hospitality techniques, optimized patient transition between support staff and medical staff and all patient interactions – developing relationships between staff and each patient that comes to the practice is paramount.

With attention to patient experience as a base, Brisbane Skin offers the full range of dermatology services including medical consults, state-of-the art laser facilities, and both dermatologist and nurse led cosmetic dermatology.

Have you considered planning for succession?

“With the WD entity our plan for succession would involve getting younger dermatologists on board with a view to transitioning interests over a number of years.

However, with the Brisbane Skin model, we believe there may be an opportunity to franchise or provide a brand that may be attractive to a larger entity to acquire.

Only time will tell... 