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# Beneath the Surface



At the heart of the Laser and Aesthetics Surgery Center of **Dermatology Associates of Plymouth Meeting** lies a culture of safety, quality assurance, and long-lasting results.

by **BILL DONAHUE**

photos by

**JODY ROBINSON**

**The skin is a paradox;** although incredibly durable, it's also surprisingly delicate and in need of constant attention from a qualified clinician. Jonathan T. Wolfe, M.D., who has been tending to patients' skin for nearly 30 years, offers the following advice for anyone seeking a professional to help maintain and beautify the body's largest organ: Choose wisely, because not all skincare providers are created equally.

"It's not as easy as we make it look," says Dr. Wolfe, the chief medical officer and director of clinical studies for Dermatology Associates of Plymouth Meeting, as well as the division head of dermatology at Jefferson Einstein Montgomery Hospital in East Norriton. "We don't let anything slip through the cracks in terms of patient safety. We consider the patient's medical history, allergies, and potential contraindications, which is especially important when you're performing

laser resurfacing or doing other cosmetic procedures.

"Our priority is the patient, not to sell you something," he continues. "Everything else is secondary."

Dermatology Associates of Plymouth Meeting is a physician-driven practice that provides a comprehensive suite of medical, surgical, and cosmetic dermatology services. The 50-person staff includes 10 physicians and physician assistants who strive to deliver long-lasting results through a combination of education, expertise, and next-generation technology.

Thomas Griffin Jr., M.D., is the founder of the practice's Laser and Aesthetics Surgery Center, which offers an array of services to restore the face and body. Whereas some cosmetic dermatology interventions are designed to repair damaged and aging skin, others work to prevent the ravages brought

about by time and the elements.

"We don't have to be purely reactionary to problems as they arise," says Dr. Griffin, who co-directs the Laser and Aesthetics Surgery Center with fellow board-certified dermatologist Nazanin Saedi, M.D. "The concept of 'prejuvenation' gets back to the idea that the earlier we start from an aesthetic perspective the less we have to deal with later on. We're treating patients of all ages, but most of the people who are interested in prejuvenation tend to be in their mid-30s. It's never too early to start caring for the skin; my 12-year-old daughter is already using skincare serums.

"Lower-level options like Botox injections can be very helpful to start earlier in life, before you notice significant changes," he continues. "Then you have fractionated CO2 laser resurfacing and other physical devices that essentially make an injury and kill microscopic zones of tissue; you're basically removing the damaged cells and DNA and allowing the body to heal itself."

Given the practice's culture of safety and quality assurance, each treatment plan begins with a thorough evaluation of a patient's needs. While popular standalone cosmetic treatments involve injectables and an assortment of lasers, some treatment plans incorporate multiple modalities to create optimal results. As an example, Dr. Grif-

fin cites the combination of BroadBand Light and a nonablative laser called MOXI to reduce facial vascularity, smooth textural irregularities, and otherwise revitalize the skin. Not only is the combination highly effective, he says, but it also requires little to no recovery time.

"We have top-quality devices to fit every niche, from hair removal to tattoo removal to melasma," he adds. "The options are exhaustive. For us to bring in something new, it has to be special, different, and able to deliver a functional and long-lasting result. ... We'll upgrade [from an existing device] if it makes treatment more effective, safe, and comfortable for the patient."

Aesthetic treatments have proliferated in recent years, with some services now being offered by practitioners such as dentists and medical spas. Drs. Griffin and Saedi see a clear distinction between a comprehensive medical practice like theirs and an enterprise that does not have the dedicated presence of a qualified physician.

"Anyone with an M.D. or a D.O. can be the medical director of a medspa, and they don't have to be on site to direct treatments," Dr. Griffin says. "That's fundamentally different from what we do here. Dr. Saedi and I are always available to our aestheticians, and we're here to direct treatments and modify plans as needed. If something unexpected happens, we're here to address it. Our presence and involvement are critical to the results our patients see."

Dr. Saedi adds, "A lot of people don't know how much training or experience their providers have. Even though many of these procedures are more common, they're still medical procedures and they should be taken seriously. As a consumer, you should find out about the provider's experience and comfort level with doing these procedures. What sets our practice apart is that we specialize in all facets of the skin and skin health."

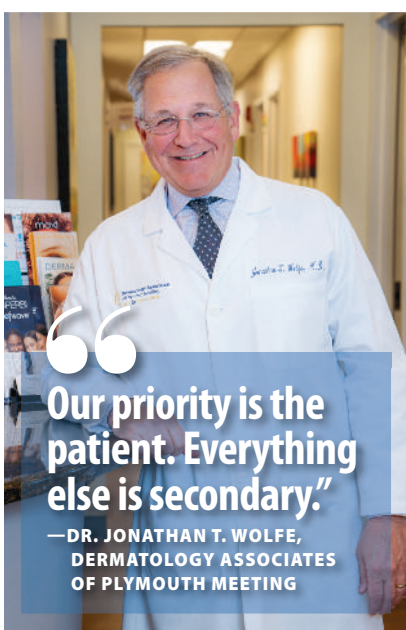
## 'Old-Time Medicine in a Modern World'

**The roots of Dermatology Associates of Plymouth Meeting** stretch back to the early 1980s. Johnathan T. Wolfe, M.D., has had the pleasure of watching the practice evolve over the course of several decades.

When he joined the practice in 1997, a small staff manned a sole 2,500-square-foot office. The practice has since grown into a sprawling 10,000-square-foot office and a satellite location at Jefferson Einstein Montgomery Hospital in East Norriton. It's likely not done growing yet.

"We're busting at the seams a little bit right now, so maybe we'll add more space to devote to technology and the delivery of service," Dr. Wolfe says. "Even if we don't expand our physical space, we're always on the lookout for high-quality people, whether it's for the front desk or our team of doctors. There's always the potential for future growth, but it has to be controlled growth.

"I like to think that we practice old-time medicine in a modern world," he continues. "Even though we've grown, we still think of ourselves as a mom-and-pop practice, and that's all related to the strength of our team."



**"Our priority is the patient. Everything else is secondary."**

—DR. JONATHAN T. WOLFE,  
DERMATOLOGY ASSOCIATES  
OF PLYMOUTH MEETING

The clinicians have an intimate understanding of the interaction that occurs between the skin and different treatment modalities. For example, some medical

lasers may be ineffective, if not damaging, for treating darker skin types. By going to a less experienced provider who might not understand how the laser will react with a certain skin tone, a patient may wind up leaving the office with a different problem than the one they came in with.

While Drs. Griffin and Saedi both enjoy the scientific aspects of the work, they also appreciate the opportunity to make a lasting positive impact in each patient's life. Removing an unsightly birthmark, softening unwanted wrinkles, or tightening loose skin can transform someone's self-confidence, thereby affecting how they present themselves to the rest of the world.

Drs. Griffin and Saedi emphasize the practice's emphasis on treating the skin in its entirety, not just from a cosmetic perspective. As a member of the clinical team is evaluating the skin for, say, dermal fillers or laser skin resurfacing, he or she may notice an irregularity that requires medical or surgical intervention. As Dr. Griffin says, "Not all brown spots are sun spots; it could be keratosis, or it could be melanoma."

"Cosmetic dermatology is only part of what we do," Dr. Wolfe adds. "We're a multifaceted skincare center: medical, surgical, pathology, pediatric—everything. We also have an active research program, with numerous clinical trials. When you're a patient of ours, you go to one office to receive all the care you need." ■



**Drs. Nazanin Saedi (left) and Thomas Griffin Jr.,**  
board-certified dermatologists and  
co-directors of the  
practice's Laser and  
Aesthetics Surgery  
Center

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