

WDS YOUNG PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT

Mara Weinstein Velez, MD, FAAD



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@drmaraweinstein

“Doors open when you least expect them to.”

Focus

Board-Certified Dermatologist
Fellowship Trained Cosmetic and Laser Surgeon

Location

Rochester, New York

Education

Fellowship	SkinCare Physicians
Residency	Cleveland Clinic Foundation
MD	Northeast Ohio Medical University
BA - Psychology	Princeton University

Mara Weinstein Velez, MD, FAAD is an Assistant Professor of Dermatology at the University of Rochester Medical Center and serves as the Director of Cosmetics and Laser Surgery. Dr. Weinstein has been invited to present at national professional meetings, published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and co-authored chapters in dermatologic textbooks including *Surgery of the Skin*, *Treatment of Traumatic and Burn Scars* and *Procedures in Cosmetic Dermatology*.

How did you become involved in the WDS and what benefits do you think WDS membership provides for residents/young physicians?

I've been an active member of the WDS for almost 9 years! It's hard to believe. I trained at the Cleveland Clinic and had the absolute honor of working with Dr. Wilma Bergfeld who founded the WDS. She encouraged me to join and get involved as a resident. At an early stage in my career, the WDS opened up a world of opportunities for mentorship, networking, leadership and service. All of the relationships I established as a resident through staying involved and serving on WDS committees, I've been able to maintain and strengthen over the years. The WDS has helped me and will continue to help me shape the career I have today!

At what point did you decide that you wanted to do academics versus private practice? What's the biggest challenge you've faced in academia?

My story is a little different. I completed a Cosmetics and Laser fellowship with SkinCare Physicians in Boston and then joined a Private Equity owned private practice in Manhattan for a year while my husband completed a fellowship program at MSKCC. Our family of 4 at the time had to move based on where he found a job and so we landed in Rochester, NY where I currently serve as the Director of Cosmetics and Lasers and Assistant Professor of Dermatology. I helped to spearhead the cosmetics program/curriculum at the university and integrated more formal device and injectable training for the residents. What could have been the hardest transition thus far, moving upstate to a place we've never stepped foot and have no family ties, has actually turned out to be a blessing for our family and our careers. A true #leapoffaith! The biggest challenge of being in

academia is getting my clinical trials up and running in a timely fashion! (Happy to discuss working for a PE owned Dermatology group with anyone interested.)

Advice to young physicians regarding leadership?

“No one is you and that is your superpower” -Dave Grohl. As a young physician, it can be difficult to know when to “lean in” or when to be an observer. Start small (taking on smaller projects/roles), be a good listener, ask a lot of questions, learn how to appropriately delegate, stay organized and most importantly – remain humble. I’ve found that doors open when you least expect them to. Don’t limit yourself to the field of Dermatology. Volunteer to lead as a classroom parent or a board member of your local Alumni community – every experience will strengthen your capabilities as a leader and help to diversify your interpersonal interactions.

I’m also going to direct you to my Instagram page here ([@drmaraweinstein](#)) where I’ve been very passionate about compiling a list of quotes that compliment this question. I would not be where I am today without my mentors, sponsors (see below) and my personal ambition.

Who were/are your mentors?

My mentors are many and have helped me every step of the way and with different aspects of my career. At this year’s WDS Forum we delved into mentorship a bit more and teased out the difference between mentorship and sponsorship. We need both mentors and sponsors in our careers because they serve different roles but that doesn’t necessarily mean they have to be different people. Toni Patterson, a career mentor says that a mentor serves as a guide, talking you through issues, encouraging you and giving you support when needed. The value of a sponsor is in turbocharging your career by promoting you and helping you obtain key roles quickly, even before you think you are ready.

With that said, I am incredibly thankful to have received both mentorship and sponsorship from my parents first and foremost (Audre DaCosta and the late Robert Weinstein, DDS), Bob Brodell, Wilma Bergfeld, Melissa Piliang, Wendy Roberts, Tina Alster, Diane Berson, Sabrina Fabi, Jeff Dover, Michael Kaminer, Ken Arndt, Tom Rohrer and Alice Pentland.

What are you working on now? What future goals do you have?

I am always working on ways to be more efficient, better rested and to improve my “work/life balance.” My goals are many - as a mom, I strive to be a role model for my children and inspire them to reach for the stars. As a physician my goal is to continue to advance the field of Cosmetic Dermatology by developing quality evidence-based clinical research and to educate my residents and colleagues across the country (nationally and internationally!)

Do you have advice to young physicians on achieving work/life balance?

A WDS mentor once told me – “there is no such thing as work-life balance.” At first I was disappointed to hear this and struggled with trying to figure out why physicians would strive for something that doesn’t exist. But then it dawned on me – we continuously beat ourselves up for not living this so-called “balanced” life, and then feel guilty for not being present enough at home (while traveling to meetings), or not being as productive as we can at work (due to exhaustion, being over-committed) – or not getting to the gym five days a week. The hard truth is that finding this balance is a daily challenge and we need to adopt a more open mind about what exactly this means to us on an individual level. I’ve learned to structure my life whereby I prioritize the things I enjoy doing the most and outsource as best I can, the things that I don’t enjoy doing. This is easier said than done, however, it has made a tremendous difference in my daily routine, and allowed me to put my best face forward in both clinical and home settings.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I am an island girl from the tiny island of Guam in the Western Pacific and currently, it's snowing and frigid in Rochester. A fellow Undergrad Alum told me at a board meeting – "if you're going to survive here, you have to find a way to celebrate every time it snows!" I took her advice seriously and lately, we've been out sledding with our three kids (1,3,5), skiing and making snowmen! I also love working out (OTF anyone?), theater, dancing and traveling.