

June 27, 2009

**Medical Dermatology Mentorship Program Summary**

Mentor- Victoria Werth, MD University of Pennsylvania

Mentee- Jennifer Alston, MD

I am exceedingly grateful to Dr. Werth, and the Medical Dermatology Society for granting me a Mentorship award. The award allowed me to travel to Philadelphia and study connective tissue disease and vesiculobullous diseases with Dr. Werth. The experience far surpassed my expectations, and I learned more than I had imagined possible in a single month.

The rotation was perfectly designed to allow me to have exposure to many subspecialty clinics. While in Dr. Werth's clinic, I saw high volumes of patients with SLE, Dermatomyositis, and Pemphigus Vulgaris. I learned first hand that a single diagnosis may have myriad presentations, treatment responses, and prognoses. Working with Dr. Werth in her clinic was an exceptional opportunity to learn from a true expert. I was able to watch her apply her expertise in the evaluation of several especially challenging cases in which a unifying diagnosis had not yet been identified. By following her process in these difficult diagnostic exercises, I learned how to approach complex multisystem connective tissue diseases. Dr. Werth is very active in research and I also learned a great deal about the process of conducting clinical research, by observing the data collection and implementation of study design.

I also rotated through Cutaneous T Cell Lymphoma, Psoriasis and pigmented lesion subspecialty clinics. I chose to assume an active role in clinics, interviewing and examining patients myself, and participating in formulating treatment plans. I observed a wide range of clinical presentations within each diagnosis, varied responses to treatment and differing disease courses. Concurrently, there was an overriding element of general repetition present within each subspecialty clinic. This repetition imparts a level of comfort in management which is gained only through treating high volumes of relatively rare disease processes.

The attending physicians heading each clinic are all leaders in Dermatology, possessing highly specific knowledge and skill sets. I was so pleased to discover that, without exception, they are also patient and committed teachers who devoted much time and energy to me personally.

Additionally, I was fully immersed in all resident didactics. This enhanced my experience of clinical learning tremendously, with well organized dermatopathology, surgery, and current literature teaching.

In summary, my MDS Mentorship Program experience was truly invaluable and I am very thankful to the society and to the attendings and residents at the University of Pennsylvania.

Jennifer Alston

