

Frank Santoro, MD

I spent one month learning at The University of Pennsylvania Department of Dermatology with Dr. Victoria Werth as my mentor. We developed a plan to expose me to a wide variety of medical dermatology clinics including the autoimmune disease clinic, cutaneous T cell lymphoma clinic, complex medical dermatology clinics and inpatient dermatology. In addition I interacted with residents and fellows and participated in departmental grand rounds and lectures.

In the autoimmune disease clinic, I was exposed to a wide variety and volume of connective tissue diseases—lupus, dermatomyositis, scleroderma, morphea and autoimmune blistering diseases. In addition to seeing physical exam findings, I learned a treatment algorithm for these complex patients, especially when first line treatments failed. Dr. Werth stressed the importance of knowing side effect profiles of immunosuppressants and using combination therapies for recalcitrant diseases. International dermatology rotators, pediatric rheumatology rotators, and clinical research fellows were integral members of this clinic and invaluable resources to learn from.

In addition to seeing patients, I also attended the North American Rheumatology-Dermatology Society (RDS) meeting and the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) meeting. At the RDS meeting I learned about some of the cutting edge research performed around the country and networked with leaders in the field. During the ACR meeting I built an appreciation for the ongoing research in lupus and scleroderma.

This rotation provided me the experience and confidence I needed to pursue an academic career in dermatology. Prior to this experience, I questioned whether or not I would be able to care for some of the sickest patients. By spending time at another institution outside of my own residency I was able to learn alongside leaders in the field and obtain career development advice from them. I became confident that I would also be able to help these patients. Upon graduation I joined the faculty at the University of Connecticut Department of Dermatology with plans to establish an autoimmune diseases clinic and also expand the inpatient dermatology program.

I would like to thank the Medical Dermatology Society for providing me with the opportunity to spend time with Dr. Werth and her colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania.