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Dermatology Resident, University of Arizona
2014-15 Medical Dermatology Society Mentorship Award
Mentor: Jeffrey Callen, MD

Working with Dr. Jeffrey Callen at the University of Louisville was a delightfully unforgettable experience. Having a great interest in complex medical dermatology, I sought an opportunity that would provide a robust encounter spanning the gamut of complex dermatologic disorders. The Medical Dermatology Society's mentorship award allowed me to work with Dr. Callen and provided exactly what I was seeking.

Firstly, my request to work with Dr. Callen was so well received. After a brief exchange of emails, he immediately provided a letter of support advocating for my receipt of the award. Prior to my arrival, he provided a thorough outline of how I would spend my time with him, and in times of his brief absence, he made arrangements for me to work with two of his colleagues who similarly treat patients with complex dermatologic disease. During my stay, he furnished excellent mentorship. After seeing patients, he would always leave time for me to ask questions, many of which were centered on treatment regimens and his personal approach to managing refractory cases. Furthermore, as a visiting resident, he encouraged my participation in his residency program's weekly education conferences and had arranged that I attend a national medical dermatology meeting which he chaired. Throughout my stay, I felt thoroughly welcomed and had all my needs accommodated.

The diversity and degree of complexity of the cases I saw with Dr. Callen was the richest part of my experience. Having contributed significantly to the dermatologic literature, Dr. Callen has acquired a prominent reputation and routinely receives referred cases for his diagnostic and management expertise. These referrals and cases that are particularly recalcitrant to traditional therapies are allocated a greater portion of time each week in his clinic. During these sessions, I observed how Dr. Callen initially evaluates the patient with new onset blisters; those with multiorgan sarcoidosis; patients with diseases of the oral mucosa; and individuals with rheumatologic disorders involving the skin. A number of other diseases were managed in this setting including severe cases of autoimmune alopecia, scarring pemphigoid, and neutrophilic dermatoses. In addition, throughout the week, we frequently treated patients with autoimmune disease, especially those with connective tissue and immunobullous disorders. It was through these venues that I observed his therapeutic approach and how he escalates or de-escalates therapy based on a patient's response. This was probably the most enriching part of my experience, namely, observing a master clinician effectively managing complicated disease. I sought to see the spectrum of complex medical dermatology and working with Dr. Callen provided exactly that. Some particularly memorable cases I encountered include Sneddon's syndrome, florid dermatomyositis, various types of cutaneous lupus erythematosus, cutaneous polyarteritis nodosa, ocular and other variants of cicatricial pemphigoid, recalcitrant aphthous stomatitis, scleredema, and Behçet's disease.

I am thoroughly grateful to the Medical Dermatology Society and to Dr. Jeffrey Callen. The MDS award supplied the financial support necessary for my trip and connected me with one of our specialty's most accomplished practitioners. Dr. Callen provided a robust and diverse experience that has left me with a greater sense of how to approach the care of patients with complex dermatologic disease. I certainly feel that my development as a clinician in medical dermatology was significantly enhanced by this wonderful opportunity.