

MDS Mentorship Program Summary Report

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This past year of formal mentorship with Dr. Iltefat Hamzavi has been catalytic and career shaping. Our time together has allowed me to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to medical management of hidradenitis suppurativa (HS), develop confidence in performing excisions for advanced disease, and gain a better understanding of how to address the multidisciplinary needs of patients with this skin disease that severely impacts quality of life. Additionally, I have gained a greater understanding of the state of epidemiologic and clinical research in HS, which will inform a career in research focused on this disease. I am thankful for this tremendous opportunity afforded by the Medical Dermatology Society Mentorship Program and to Dr. Iltefat Hamzavi for being generous with his time and expertise.

The primary clinical focus of this mentorship experience was caring for patients with severe and medically complex HS. Dr. Hamzavi supervises a weekly HS sub-specialty clinic, one of the largest of its type in the country. Throughout the year of mentorship, I traveled to observe these HS clinics, where I had the opportunity to discuss difficult management decisions with Dr. Hamzavi, gained exposure to a wider array of medical treatment options including IV ertapenem, learned to administer tumescent anesthesia necessary for large excisions, and observed HS excisions performed with ablative CO₂ laser.

As I was establishing my own HS sub-specialty clinic in Philadelphia and now am aiming to do the same in Atlanta, it has also been extremely helpful to learn about the ways in which the clinic structure at Henry Ford clinic facilitates a comprehensive care model that meets the medical and social needs of its patients. In addition to establishing collaborations with other medical specialties, Dr. Hamzavi's clinic provides affordable wound care supplies, offers multimedia educational materials to prepare patients for HS surgery, and connects interested patients with the community through a patient support group which is always attended by at least one physician. Even more important than the medical and managerial skills that I have gained through this mentorship, I learned a great deal from seeing how Dr. Hamzavi actively listens to patients, helps them navigate complex decision making, and inspires resilience even in the setting of debilitating disease.

Dr. Hamzavi continues to offer invaluable advice that shapes the trajectory of my career. He has introduced me to national leaders in the field and provided opportunities to participate in multi-site studies. I recently moved to Emory University, where I plan to develop an HS sub-specialty clinic, perform HS-focused clinical and translational research, and engage in advocacy at a local and national level. The support of MDS Mentorship Program has helped improve my skills as a clinician, introduced me to a new community of academic colleagues, and planted the seed for a career trajectory in academic medical dermatology that I find exciting and fulfilling.