

JDPA

Journal of Dermatology *for* Physician Assistants

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SDPA NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

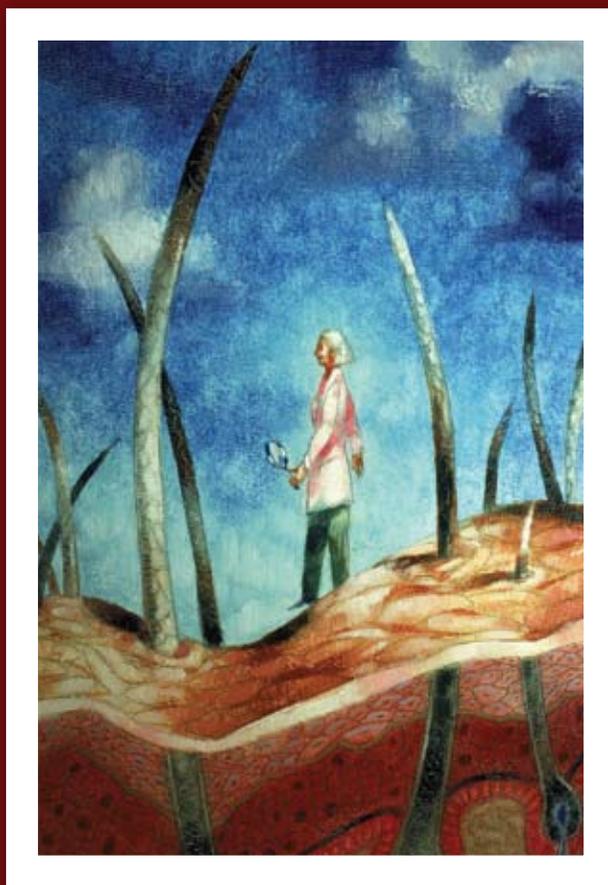
DERMATOLOGY PA NEWS AND NOTES

CLINICAL DERMATOLOGY

SURGICAL DERMATOLOGY

COSMETIC DERMATOLOGY

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



SUPPLEMENT
for Locks of Love



Official Journal of the Society of Dermatology Physician Assistants

JDPA

Journal of Dermatology for Physician Assistants

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FROM THE PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Defining Beauty From The Inside Out

By Tina Hill

Hair is one of the most defining features of an individual. The color, texture, and length all distinguish one person from another. Women spend more time on their hair than on any other feature of their body. Millions of dollars a year are spent on hair products, haircuts, and hair colors. Men may be a bit different, but they too have very definite opinions about hair styles for their spouses....long, short, blond, brunette, etc.

My daughter, Moriah, has had to define her identity through means other than those relating to her hair. She has a disease called alopecia universalis. When she was three years old, I recall brushing out her hair one day and seeing a small, perfectly round bald spot on the back of her head. My first thought was that her big brother had taken a pair of scissors and experimented being a barber on his little sister. She was very adamant that he had not cut her hair, nor had she. I paid little attention to it until a few days later when I found another small, perfectly round bald spot on the front part of her head.

I took her to the pediatrician. I assumed these two spots had something to do with her type 1 diabetes. Her doctor said, "She probably just pulled her hair out. Don't worry, it will grow back." A month later, more hair was falling out so I took her to another doctor who said, "She has allergies. Let's put her on some steroids and she will be fine in just a few days." This little bit of advice landed us in the ER with uncontrollable blood sugar levels. We did not go back to that doctor.



Tina Hill resides in Lindale, Texas. She is married and has 4 beautiful children, 2 son-in-loves, 1 chosen son and 2 grandchildren. She is a pastoral counselor and director of a women's home. Moriah is her youngest child and has just celebrated her 16th birthday. When Moriah was first diagnosed with alopecia

universalis, the teenage years were the ones that Tina most dreaded. After raising 2 other girls, she knew how important Moriah's appearance would be for her. Now, after 13 years, Tina can confidently say, "Moriah's identity goes much deeper than her external beauty. She is stunning from the inside out."

We still had gotten no answers, until one day I went to a little country practice and saw a doctor there for a common cold. I had my daughter with me. During my exam, I asked him if he had any thoughts about these strange little bald spots. He looked closely at them and with a sense of sadness said, "I am sorry to tell you, but it would appear to me that she has alopecia areata. I want to send you to a dermatologist for an accurate diagnosis, but I am pretty sure that is what it is." This was thirteen years ago. Today, she still is under the care of a dermatologist for alopecia universalis. She has no hair on her head, arms, or legs, and has no eyebrows or eye lashes. Occasionally she will see some growth, but shortly thereafter it will fall out again. It is still amazing to me that after all these years I have never found one strand of hair that has fallen out.

She is a beautiful young lady. She has had to find her identity as a woman through other channels. We have never allowed her to base her identity on her illness. Rather we have taught her that she is defined by her faith in the One who created her. She is very intelligent, musically gifted, loves life, and loves to love others. She finds joy in every circumstance, good or bad.

The most difficult times for her have been when people assume that she has cancer. She gets comments like, "It's okay honey, it will grow back. Mine did after my treatments." or, "I am so sorry you have cancer, are you going to be okay?" These types of misunderstandings of alopecia have been the most difficult part.

The Locks of Love Foundation has been extremely helpful in giving beauty and dignity back to the children afflicted by alopecia. They provide beautiful natural hair prostheses for children with this disease. I am very grateful for their sensitivity to our daughter and other children dealing with alopecia and similar diseases. They understand that hair does have an intrinsic value in defining one's beauty. Moriah's life has been greatly impacted by their generosity and compassion.

Our pursuit is now focused on finding the missing link to Moriah's healing. Her medical issues center around her autoimmune system and we are passionate to get to the root of the problem. Until then, we will continue to face the challenges head on, believing that it is simply a matter of time before a cure is found. Moriah has always been a source of faith and perseverance; it is for her and other children like her that we must find an answer.

TAKE HOME POINTS for DERM PAs:

By Steven K. Shama, MD, MPH

- I am touched by this mother's love for her child. When caring for patients, we should strongly consider working with a close relative to help patients not only treat their skin conditions but to understand them.
- When others misunderstand Moriah's skin condition by assuming it is secondary to a cancer treatment, I only wish we could do more public education, not only to recognize certain skin changes, but to be sensitive to the emotional needs of patients.
- How wonderful it is that this mother is left with hope that one day there will be a cure for alopecia areata. As health care practitioners, we should always have hope and leave patients with hope that one day a cure will be found for whatever is affecting them. 🙏

Dermatology Physician Assistants



Physician Assistants (PAs) in dermatology play a number of varied and vital roles.

PAs are medical providers licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. From patient care and education, to skin surgery, treatment of chronic skin conditions, and cosmetic procedures, PAs are dynamic members of the

healthcare team. PAs practice in every medical and surgical specialty and have been collaborating with dermatologists for 30 years, providing a wide variety of services. These include diagnosing, prescribing medications, ordering and interpreting lab tests, wound suturing, and medical or surgical treatment of a wide variety of clinical diseases. As with all PAs, dermatology PAs are legally and ethically bound to practice only under physician supervision.

PAs are trained in intensive, accredited education programs.

Because of the close working relationship that PAs have with physicians, PAs are educated in the medical model designed to mirror and complement physician training. PAs take a national certification examination and to maintain their certification, they must complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years and take a recertification exam every six years. Graduation from an accredited PA program and passage of the national certifying exam are required for state licensure.

How a PA practices dermatology varies with training, experience, and state law. In addition, the scope of the PA's responsibilities corresponds to the supervising physician's scope of practice. In general, a PA will see many of the same types of patients as the physician. Referral to the physician, or close consultation between the PA and physician, is based on the dynamic relationship between the physician and PA.

The Society of Dermatology Physician Assistants (SDPA) is a non-profit professional organization, composed of members who provide dermatologic care or have an interest in the medical specialty of dermatology. Fellow members provide medical services under the supervision of a board certified dermatologist.

More information can be found at www.dermpa.org and www.aapa.org.

