



# Educational experience

**Dr Sepi Etemad-Shahidi** shares her experience of training with CosmeDocs

**W**hen I first applied to dental school, I never imagined that seven years later, I would be working in the prestigious location of Harley Street, and not as a dentist, but as an aesthetician. I have to be honest, I had never even heard the term “aesthetician” or “cosmetic physician” at that point, but thanks to all the media coverage that surrounded the Kardashian/Jenner sisters, I first became privy to this exploding industry a couple of years ago.

Having completed my dental degree, I had a newfound appreciation for the importance of beauty, symmetry, subtlety and the other factors that together result in an aesthetically pleasing final product. I then started looking for what can be done extra-orally in order to improve a smile and, naturally, came across lip fillers and botulinum toxin. This then led me to complete a basic weekend training course in facial aesthetics.

Coming from a dental background, I had already mastered the art of firstly having a steady hand and then feeling comfortable injecting a client in and around the face. I found the course a very helpful way of boosting my entry into the industry, but I still did not feel that my skills were sufficient to be let loose on the world. I now had the desire, knowledge and ability, but not the confidence; so, I was still in a predicament.

After a few weeks of careful research, I came across the CosmeDocs Harley Street Institute Fellowship in Aesthetic Medicine. This programme is dedicated to taking a junior injector with only basic skills and knowledge and transforming them into a confident and advanced injector, through a rigorous, structured six-month programme.

This was exactly what I was looking for, and having pressed the submit button, I soon received a phone call from the Harley Street Institute (which is the training wing of CosmeDocs Clinic) to schedule an interview. This went well and before I knew it, I was the first ever CosmeDocs fellow in training.

I was told from the start that this was a new programme, launched as a result of the current issues with aesthetic medicine regulation and the CQC and GMC and HEE clamping down on inadequate training. This programme is carefully tailored to ensure it exceeds far beyond what is required for new aesthetic practitioners, even when the new, upcoming requirements come into force. The training programme ranges from ongoing one-to-one hands-on training and observation to logbook maintenance, and also includes regular appraisals.

From my very first week, I was exposed to the extremely busy daily list of the principal doctors and given the ideal opportunity to observe procedure first hand

with a simultaneous Q&A. The patients were kind and understanding enough to allow a trainee to sit in from the initial consultation all the way to the final treatment. After several weeks of shadowing the various doctors in the clinic, I started practising on “models” under the watchful eye of my mentors and received both real-time advice and tips.

In no time, I felt confident enough to start seeing patients on my own. Being exposed to a variety of doctors had given me the ability to pick and mix the many different techniques and methods I had been taught, and find the one best suited to my hands. During this time, I was also set a number of research assignments to aid my learning and understanding of not just botox and fillers, but also the cosmetic industry as a whole, and everything that it encompasses. I realised that in order to be a good practitioner, you need to have adequate knowledge of all that medicine and science has to offer regarding cosmetic treatments, as well as in-depth knowledge of the body and its interactions with these products and treatments. By carrying out research and writing up reports on skin care and anatomy, I developed a new appreciation and understanding of how everything is interlinked and, as a result, felt much more confident about giving advice to my patients regarding their general aesthetic concerns.

Another crucial set of skills that is very important to good aesthetic practice is to have a creative eye. Some people are born with it, while others can learn it. The explosion of aesthetic treatments around the world has preoccupied several interested physicians, who have developed short courses that target individual issues. The sector of aesthetics, however, hasn't had time to mature yet and create protocols, examination techniques and choices

for their purchasers. We still tend to use aesthetic designing tools that have been predominantly devised by plastic surgeons and supported by Leonardo da Vinci's ratios for the length of the chin, jaw and nose height. However, aesthetics is a different art to plastic surgery and the rules and techniques for evaluating the face for contouring and providing anti-ageing treatments should be different.

After receiving sufficient clinical exposure, research and appraisals from the program, I was asked by my mentors if I was ready to finally have my own clinic list. Initially, I was hesitant, but my mentor was kind enough to sit in on my first

clinic as an observer to ease me into it. Then, after my first full clinic day on my own, we sat down and I went through the good, the bad and the ugly with my mentor. The discussion proved to be invaluable – this was the perfect handover, and it was only at this point that I truly felt sufficiently equipped to provide my patients with an exceptional bespoke treatment, executed with both the appropriate skills and knowledge.

As I have discovered, there really is nothing like practice, practice, practice. At CosmeDocs, I had the rare fortune of being exposed to a large client list from the get-go, so I have never been short of patients and opportunities. One of the perks of working in such a busy clinic is the speed at which your skills and time management improves.

Working alongside such a helpful and supportive team has proven just as valuable as the study materials and clinical experience the clinic has provided. I have quickly realised the importance of having someone accessible close at hand, who I can grab for a second opinion at any time. The fellowship programme has, therefore, proved to be an invaluable experience, not only resulting in skills in facial aesthetics, but also the confidence, support and experience that I so desperately required to become a respectable and exceptional aesthetician. I now look forward to helping develop this fellowship further in 2017 hope to continue to grow and develop alongside the clinic and its team. **AM**

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>> **Dr Sepi Etemad-Shahidi** graduated from King's College London school of Dentistry. As a dentist turned aesthetic practitioner, she has been able to hone in the delicate skills and manual dexterity demanded by dentistry, and apply them in the world of medical aesthetics. Dr Etemad-Shahidi has an ardent interest in aesthetics and has undertaken several research projects, an endeavor to allow further improvement of her skills and knowledge, thus providing her patients with the most current treatments. She is registered with the General Dental Council and a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and the British Dental Association.

