

WDS YOUNG PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT: Ashley Wysong, MD



Ashley Wysong, MD
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<i>Focus</i>	Board-Certified Dermatologist, Mohs Micrographic Surgery	
<i>Location</i>	Omaha, NE	
<i>Education</i>	Fellowship	Mohs Micrographic Surgery, Scripps Green Hospital
	Residency	Dermatology, Stanford University Hospital
	Internship	Duke University School of Medicine
	Medical School	Duke University School of Medicine

How did you become involved in the WDS and what benefits do you think WDS membership provides for residents/young physicians?

Like a lot of WDS members, I was first recruited in by a senior WDS member, Dr. Latanya Benjamin. I initially became involved in sun safety and outreach activities. My first introduction to the WDS nationally was as a first-year resident, when I attended the WDS luncheon at the annual AAD meeting. I was floored by the energy in the room and all of these amazingly accomplished women who were paving the way and mentoring within our field. Dr. Diane Berson and Dr. Janet Hickman asked me to serve as the WDS Resident Representative to the Board of Directors – I have been hooked ever since!

At what point did you decide that you wanted to do academics versus private practice? What's the biggest challenge you've faced in academia?

The decision to practice in academics versus a private practice setting is a personal decision. Really early on, even as an undergraduate student, I always knew I would work in an academic setting. I love the energy of being around students, teaching, and innovation. I revel in the challenge of seeing complex conditions and being on the “cutting edge” of science. During residency, I learned that I absolutely loved big skin tumors and rare cutaneous tumors, so it was an easy decision to stay in academics.

One of the biggest challenges in academics is balancing the clinical demands with desire for teaching, mentoring, innovating and doing research. It’s the challenge of wearing multiple hats, literally trying to “do it all.” My advice to young physicians would be to try to find the right balance for you. From a research standpoint, there is less and less funding from national institutes and other types of funding sources. From a teaching standpoint—I feel as though we are on the brink of a major shift in education. Students learn in so many different ways. Gone are the days of lecturing in big lecture halls and standing in the front of a room. We now have to think of ways to personalize and integrate unique teaching methods, such as virtual reality, augmented intelligence clinical decision making, and simulation into our curricula. We are truly in a learning revolution.

Advice to young physicians regarding leadership?

If you are interested in leadership, it’s important to seek out lots of different mentors. Talk to people about the things they have found helpful throughout years. There are all kinds of formal leadership programs through the WDS, AAD, APD, and ASDS and other dermatologic organizations. Outside of dermatology there are programs

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such as ELAM and leadership opportunities through the AAMC. There are all sorts of ways to lead locally, regionally and nationally. WDS has opportunities to lead through organizing sun safety or local shelter service events as well as by hosting a local-regional networking event. It's also good to get involved in WDS committees. This is a fantastic way to begin a leadership path and see how group organizational leadership works. WDS makes it easy to become involved because they are one of the few organizations that allow resident members to hold committee positions.

Who were/are your mentors?

I have so many mentors to thank both within and outside of the WDS! Within the WDS, Drs. Pearl Grimes, Deb McFarlane, Latanya Benjamin, Kathleen Hectorne, Mona Gohara, Elizabeth McBurney, Janet Hickman, Diane Berson, Mary Maloney, and Suzanne Olbricht, to name a few. I participated in the WDS mentorship program and Deb McFarland was my mentor. I think it's important to have both peer and senior mentors.

What are you working on now? What future goals do you have?

For the last 10 months, I've been working on building a department of dermatology from scratch at the University of Nebraska! Being Chairwoman of a new dermatology department has been a really unique and unbelievable experience. Being able to develop clinical, research, teaching, and outreach programs in an area that is grossly underserved has been absolutely amazing. We are working on building what I like to call the "academic department of the future" with clinics that run with the technology, efficiency, and staffing models of a private practice, cutting edge translational and clinical research our faculty are excited about, and residency and fellowship programs with a focus on education and mentorship over service. It's both an honor and privilege to serve our field in this way.

Through the WDS, I have learned so much about mentorship, leadership, and collaboration – all of which I used on a daily basis. Within the WDS, I serve on the Board of Directors and am currently Chair of the service committee. I am very proud of our sun safety efforts and of the shelter initiative which is something that we've really gotten off the ground in the last year under the leadership of Dr. Pearl Grimes. We've hosted over 10 events nationally and we are looking to go international this next year

Do you have advice to young physicians on achieving work/life balance?

The older I get, the more I realize, "don't take yourself too seriously!" At the end of the day, you can only get so much stuff done. Dermatology is the best job in the world, we love our job, but our jobs don't love us back. You have to make time for loved ones, hobbies, and generally just being a well-rounded human. You must make personal time for yourself. As women, we often put ourselves at the bottom of totem pole. If you don't take time for yourself, your health and your mental happiness, you can't be your full self or be fully present for everyone else.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to travel or plan the next travel trip! My husband and I are both sailboat captains and we do 1-2 sailing trips a year all over the world. I used to run a lot, but after three knee surgeries, I am a member of the Master's swim team. I also love a good Netflix binge and spending time with friends and family.