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An Easy Commitment

The WDS mentorship program highlights the ways I love to contribute to our profession. Because I am so devoted to teaching and to promoting the advancement of dermatology, giving time to mentoring young dermatologists was an easy commitment for me to make. Moreover, the fact that the WDS made mentoring a top priority drew me into the organization.

During my dermatology residency training, there was no mentorship program available, but if one had existed, I definitely would have applied for it. My mentees shadow me 9 to 5, they are given reading assignments, and sometimes they assist with manuscript preparation or research compilation. The total immersion during their rotations also allows mentees to learn the working mechanics of an efficiently operated clinical facility and to observe office dynamics—among staff members, the physicians and patients.

These firsthand encounters enable mentees to begin development of their own individual style. It’s fulfilling to see mentees discover what they enjoy about the specialty and take their initial steps toward their respective niches.

What I am able to contribute to dermatology residents is more than returned to me. Their enthusiasm is infectious, and they educate me while I am educating them. They remind me what I have forgotten about general dermatology, they ask probing questions, and they update me on all the latest medications. Challenged by today’s economic and competitive environment, mentees are undoubtedly more business-savvy than I was at the completion of my training.

Given the intensity and pride of mentoring, I’d say the experience is a lot like parenting—except mentees listen . . . and they remember to write.

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