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Preface



Donn R. Chatham, MD
Guest Editor

Donn R. Chatham, MD
Chatham Facial Plastic Surgery
4001 Kresge Way, Suite 310
Louisville, KY 40207, USA

E-mail address:
DrChat@mindspring.com

The topic of dealing with the “difficult patient” is a bit atypical and certainly not one associated with glee; nevertheless, it deals with one of the hard realities of medical and surgical practice. This topic is not really new: it is certain that in years past, doctors also were challenged with difficult patients, maybe even losing their head if the king was not cured of his ailments! Having spoken on this subject at various meetings, chaired panels with experienced surgeons, and wrestled with some of my own “difficult patients,” it seemed time to assemble a book of articles on this topic.

In this issue, you will find the opinions, thoughts, suggestions, and advice of plastic surgeons with many years of cumulative experience. We should always listen to those who honestly share their wisdom and admonitions, which are often based on their personal and real-life experiences. The reader is fortunate to learn from many of the most distinguished and respected mentors and leaders in the field of plastic surgery. In addition to facial and

other plastic surgeons, this edition has advice from a knowledgeable and battle-tested attorney and from an anthropologist who has “studied and adopted” physicians his whole career.

Some authors were asked to delve deeply into a particular subject; others were sought for their breadth of experience in general. Writing styles vary, ranging from scientific to more thoughtful essay. For example, the reader will see that a very experienced West Coast surgeon and a very experienced Midwest surgeon independently share their personal experiences, and come to very similar conclusions and ideas.

Given the serious subject matter, hopefully the measure of levity, in both language and illustrations, will make this edition more appealing. In addition, I hope you will find the “round table” article, which asks specific questions to a variety of surgeons, equally fascinating and informative.

I am indebted to my colleagues, who generously contributed their time and wisdom to make this edition most illuminating. As I first read their

manuscripts, I felt as if I were sitting at a table next to one of my heroes, sharing an early evening drink, and listening to him tell of his very professional, very personal life experiences, while I eagerly awaited his next sentence.

It is my hope that this issue will help us, if not avoid, at least shed some revealing light upon useful ways of handling that most challenging, most exasperating, and even at times, most intriguing of patients: the “difficult patient.”