

Two physicians, longtime friends partner in Dermatology+Plastic Surgery

By Ken Datzman

About 24 months ago, two area physicians in different disciplines partnered in a practice venture that has created operating synergies and patient convenience.

They opened a one-stop office for dermatology and plastic-surgery procedures, bringing together years of expertise in their respective fields of medicine.

Both practitioners — board-certified dermatologist Dr. Anita Saluja and double board-certified reconstructive and plastic surgeon Dr. Rebecca Novo — are in the business of helping patients look their best.

Dermatologists are the recognized experts in skin care, while plastic surgeons perform a wide range of procedures, from eyelid surgery to breast augmentation to liposuction and facelift, for example.

“We want our patients to look natural, healthy, and refreshed. Beauty is power,” said Dr. Saluja, who graduated from one of the top medical schools in America at the age when most college students are starting their sophomore or junior year.

“One of my most popular procedures is resurfacing the skin for sun damage and wrinkles,” said Dr. Novo, who has performed more than 3,000 surgeries of various types. “I do a lot of anti-aging work with lasers.”

Minor imperfections in the skin, such as brown spots, visible capillaries, wrinkles, acne scars, discoloration, or other marks may be improved with laser skin-resurfacing procedures.

Their full-service concept has been so well received that their practice, “Dermatology+Plastic Surgery” — with the brand components of “For Your Best Self” and “2 Experts are Better Than 1” — is now expanding at Brevard Medical City on North Wickham Road in Melbourne.

The two doctors are doubling their space with their office-expansion project, going from 2,000 square feet to 4,000 square feet.

“It’s going to be an exciting year for the practice. We are growing,” said Dr. Saluja, who has worked in her specialty since 2001. Dermatology+Plastic Surgery has a team of 14 people.

“We see our staff as a billboard for the practice,” she said. “Dr. Novo has done plastic surgery on a number of them. And I have done a range of aesthetic skin-care injections to improve the appearance and health of their skin. People who are thinking about a procedure can talk to the staff as well and ask questions.”

Dr. Saluja added, “The staff members will share their experiences with the individual procedures they’ve had at the practice. We want people to feel comfortable coming here for dermatology and plastic surgery. We want to build long-term relationships with patients.”

Talking about plastic surgery has become more accepted, as two-thirds of doctors (67 percent) say their patients are starting earlier and “owning it,” where people reveal and openly discuss their plastic surgery with friends and families, according to a new survey from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Also, more than three-quarters of surgeons surveyed agreed that their patients are seeking a “more natural” (78 percent) versus a “sculpted” look (15 percent).

Dr. Saluja specializes in preventive and aesthetic skin care. Dr. Novo has extensive training in aesthetic procedures of the face, breasts, and body.

Aesthetic dermatology treatments are non-invasive or minimally invasive procedures designed to rejuvenate your appearance without surgery and include a number of skin-care options.



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Dr. Anita Saluja, right, a board-certified dermatologist, and Dr. Rebecca Novo, a double-board certified reconstructive and plastic surgeon, have partnered in the practice Dermatology+Plastic Surgery at Brevard Medical City on North Wickham Road in Melbourne. They launched their venture two years ago and now the practice is adding 2,000 square feet to its office. When the construction is completed, the two physicians will be doing their procedures in a 4,000-square-foot facility. The growing practice has a staff of 14 people.

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Dermatology+Plastic Surgery

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The two physicians are longtime friends who grew up in the tight-knit community of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., located on the northeastern end of that state's scenic Upper Peninsula.

"We are from the same hometown in northern Michigan. In fact, I went to high school with Dr. Saluja's younger brother, who is also super-brilliant," said Dr. Novo.

"Setting the practice up the way we have has created a lot of synergies and the patients tell us they like the convenience of having all these services offered at one location. I practice head-to-toe plastic surgery, and Dr. Saluja offers a full menu of services and is especially known for her use of injectables to improve the appearance of the skin."

"The majority of my practice centers on the use of injectables," added Dr. Saluja. There are many U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved injectables on the aesthetic market today and Dr. Saluja has injected thousands of "happy faces" using neuromodulators (including Botox and Dysport) and a wide range of fillers, such as Restylane, Juvederm Ultra, Bellafill, and Sculptra.

Dr. Saluja ranks in the top 1 percent of all "injectors in volume" and holds high awards with the two largest injectable manufacturers — Allergan and Galderma.

Dr. Saluja sits on the national Allergan Aesthetics Medical Advisory Board. Allergan is the maker of Botox, Juvederm hyaluronic acid fillers, and Kybella, the newest injectable used to dissolve fat in the neck, or get rid of a so-called "double-chin."

Dermatology+Plastic Surgery offers a couple of signature promotions, one of which is "Beautiful Skin Fridays." The promotion is offered the first Friday of every month. Bring a colleague or friend and you'll receive a discount on an injectable. "It's a great way to experience a peel or Botox or a filler," said Dr. Saluja. "We also offer 15 percent off all skin-care products on those Fridays."

Dermatology+Plastic Surgery sells medical-grade skin-care products at its office and online, including the "SalujaMD" natural skin-care line. Each ingredient has been specifically selected for its ability to support and promote the skin's natural restorative processes, she said.

One of the most frequently performed procedures Dr. Novo does is upper eyelid surgery. "It's done in the office under local anesthesia. There is a quick recovery from the procedure. The patient will see about one week of swelling."

It is common for the eyes to be the first area of the face "to look older and tired," she said. They begin to develop folds that droop above the eyes, puffy bags under the eyes, puffiness in the upper eyelids, and wrinkles around the eyes.

Eyelid surgery, or blepharoplasty, was one of the top cosmetic procedures performed in 2017, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons' most recent report. Of the nearly 1.8 million cosmetic surgical procedures performed that year, the top four were: breast augmentation, liposuction, nose reshaping, and eyelid surgery.

The report shows continued growth in cosmetic procedures over the previous year. According to the annual plastic surgery procedural statistics, there were 17.5 million surgical and minimally invasive cosmetic procedures performed in the United States in 2017, a 2 percent increase over 2016.

The statistics also reveal Americans are turning to new and innovative ways to shape their bodies, as minimally invasive cosmetic procedures have increased nearly 200 percent since 2000.

Dr. Novo, for example, performs a "completely non-invasive, in-office procedure to remove fat and tighten skin." She uses the non-surgical system called

"truSculpt 3D," a new dimension in body-sculpting.

The system utilizes a controlled "monopolar radio frequency" technology that targets, heats and destroys fat cells beneath the skin. If you diet and exercise and still have areas of stubborn fat, truSculpt is clinically proven to eliminate fat cells regardless of your shape or body type.

"It's a popular treatment for both men and women because the radio frequency works to reduce areas of unwanted fat," said Dr. Novo.

Dr. Novo was raised by an artist and a physician who cultivated in her an early passion for artistic expression and the sciences, respectively.

From age 3, she said she can remember "having her hands in clay in her mother's studio." By age 5, she was interested in her father's books on anatomy.

Dr. Novo attended Lake Superior State College on a full basketball scholarship. She was the team's captain. The team had a lot of success on the court during her years there, including winning a championship.

After graduating, she went on to earn her medical degree from Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, her parents' hometown. Dr. Novo then completed eight years of comprehensive surgical training, including five years in general surgery at Wayne State University and a three-year Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Fellowship at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

"Credentials matter," said Dr. Novo. "We are both certified by accredited boards of medicine — the American Board of Dermatology, the American Board of General Surgery, and the American Board of Plastic Surgery. That is important. Our patients are well educated and they look for credentialing and experience."

Over the next 10 years, plastic surgeons want to see advancements in proper surgical training and certification — as well as in skin tightening, scar management, and fat grafting — become top priorities in the field, according to a new survey of practitioners conducted by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Dr. Novo's colleague, Dr. Saluja, cut a wide path in higher education at a young age, finding herself among an elite group of teenage classroom achievers in America.

At age 15, she earned her bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Michigan. Then she transitioned from studying numbers to studying medicine. Dr. Saluja was only 20 years old when she was awarded her M.D. degree from the University of Michigan. The average age of a graduating medical student in America is 27. "I got an early start on my career in medicine," said Dr. Saluja, adding that she was in "a dual-enrollment program since the 10th grade."

After completing an internship, Dr. Saluja undertook three years of dermatology specialty training at Emory University in Atlanta. She is also an assistant volunteer professor at the University of Central Florida School of Medicine.

Dr. Saluja and Dr. Novo are both married to physicians who practice together. Dr. Robert Novo is an anesthesiologist with Brevard Physician Associates. Dr. Saluja's husband, Dr. Rajesh Gutta, is an emergency medicine doctor with that group.

Dermatology+Plastic Surgery is on the forefront of anti-aging aesthetic care. Dr. Saluja and Dr. Novo, for example, perform the "Y-Lift" and "Renuvion by J-Plasma" combination treatment.

"The unique synergy of the treatments offers superior results for men and women who want to look their best without extensive surgery, scarring, and downtime," said Dr. Saluja, who performs the Y-Lift technique, an alternative to derma fillers or a "liquid facelift."

The Y-Lift focuses on two key support structures of the face — the cheekbone and the jawline — and restores volume to naturally lift the skin. Dr. Saluja uses dermal Juvederm fillers to carefully sculpt these areas of the face in a 45-minute procedure. Y-Lift results last one to three years, she said.

In addition to lifting and sculpting the face with the Y-Lift technique, Dr. Novo addresses loose skin in the neck and aging facial skin with the Renuvion by J-Plasma treatment.

The procedure uses a combination of radio-frequency energy and cold helium plasma to gently heat tissues for combined skin tightening and resurfacing benefits. Jowls and wrinkles are also greatly diminished. "It changes the game in skin tightening," said Dr. Novo. "And it's used as a very powerful tool for facial skin enhancements. Patients see from 70 to 90 percent improvement in wrinkle reduction. It also removes photoaging and sun damage."

Skin cancer reconstructive surgery is another area of expertise for Dr. Novo. Skin cancer is a disease that affects people of every age, gender and ethnicity. One-in-five Americans will develop skin cancer by the age 70, says the Skin Cancer Foundation. In fact, more people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year in the U.S. than all other cancers combined.

Knowing the risk factors and practicing sun protection year-round are ways to reduce your risk, said Dr. Novo. One protection is to use a broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen "with an SPF of 30 or higher," she said.

Dermatology+Plastic Surgery sells a cutting-edge sunscreen called Eryfotona Actinica, with a broad-spectrum SPF of 50+. The product, designed to advance skin health, is manufactured by ISDIN. It helps prevent and reduce the occurrence of pre-cancerous lesions "via the DNA repairsome technology" which won a Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2015. The product contains vitamin E and antioxidants. "The product contains an ingredient found in plants," said Dr. Saluja, who does skin-cancer checks for her dermatology patients.

Other sun protection includes wearing a broad-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses. Clothing can be your most effective form of sun protection, according to dermatologists. The more skin you cover, the better, so choose long sleeves and long pants whenever possible.

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends to "seek the shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun is strongest." An extra rule-of-thumb is the "shadow rule." If your shadow is shorter than you are, the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation is stronger; if your shadow is longer, UV radiation is less intense.

Dermatology+Plastic Surgery treats both men and women. Dr. Saluja said procedures for men are growing at the practice. Men, in general, are the fastest-growing segment of the skin health and anti-aging market. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, facial cosmetic surgery and nonsurgical facial procedures are the most popular treatments among men.

For a host of reasons, men are embracing facial enhancements through surgical and noninvasive procedures, including laser hair removal and Botox.

"Men want to look their best, especially if they are in the business world interacting with other people. While we treat more women than men, our male client base is on the rise. Whether it's men or women, our aesthetic dermatology treatments address common skin conditions, including sun damage and visible signs of the aging process such as wrinkles, creases, and fine lines. Working as a team, we offer patients customized treatments. We're looking to have another good year in 2019 as the practice continues to grow," said Dr. Saluja.