

Candela Lasers Transition Physician into Successful Private Practice

By Bob Kronemyer, Associate Editor

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In just one year, Sarah Sawyer, M.D., has been able to build a successful cosmetic private practice after spending three years as an assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. “The university was in need of someone to run its laser center and to generate more of a cosmetic front to the department,” explained Dr. Sawyer, who completed a dermatologic surgery fellowship in San Diego, Calif., in 2003. “I was able to generate a lot of new cosmetic business for the department, as well as offer patients a more scientific explanation of the treatments they were receiving.”

Dr. Sawyer left her university position in December 2006. “I had decided that Birmingham was an area I wanted to stay in,” she said. “But more importantly, I had this dream of creating my own practice, with an exact design and technology and the right staff.”

In April 2007 Dr. Sawyer opened Dermatology and Laser of Alabama in Birmingham. Her practice started with three aesthetic lasers from Candela Corporation (Wayland, Mass.) including, Vbeam Perfecta (595 pulsed dye), Smoothbeam (1450 nm) and GentleLASE (755 nm alexandrite). Over the ensuing eight months, an additional three light-based products from Candela were added to her collection: GentleYAG (1064 nm Nd:YAG), AlexTriVantage (Q-switched YAG) and Candela’s distributed intense pulsed light (IPL) system.

About 60% of the practice is currently aesthetics, with the top three indications being rosacea, hyperpigmentation and hair removal. With aggressive settings, most rosacea patients achieve “a drastic response” after only one treatment with the Vbeam Perfecta, compared to two or three sessions (every four to six weeks) with the IPL system.

Hyperpigmentation, mostly from photo-damage, is treated with either IPL or the AlexTriVantage. “For full face, I treat with IPL. I can probably eliminate 50% of lentigines in one session,” Dr. Sawyer said. And with the AlexTriVantage, a brown spot disappears after one session with sun protection.

Although primarily for hair removal, the GentleLASE can also treat melasma, lentigines and birthmarks. On the other hand, the GentleYAG “is good for dark skinned hair removal and telangiectasis,” Dr. Sawyer said. Both lasers have the same treatment protocol for hair: four sessions spaced three to eight weeks apart, depending on the area treated. “Patients with coarse dark hair can expect 80% to 100% elimination of hair in four sessions,” Dr. Sawyer noted. “But these patients may require a touch-up session in the future.”

Dr. Sawyer also uses the Vbeam Perfecta to treat hypertrophic scars and keloids, angiomas and acne scars, whereas the Smoothbeam is ideal for some acne scars, for example, mild depressed acne scars and sebaceous hyperplasia. “The Smoothbeam is also approved by the Food and Drug Administration for acne,” Dr. Sawyer stated.

Besides treating hyperpigmentation, the AlexTriVantage “is an excellent tattoo removal laser. It covers all the treatable tattoo colors,” Dr. Sawyer said. Another reason Dr. Sawyer invested in Candela devices — the Dynamic Cooling Device (DCD). A patented epidermal protection system found only on Candela lasers, DCD not only protects the skin, it also improves patient comfort. “Candela’s breadth of product line and unique treatment capabilities truly helped me establish my practice and differentiate my services from the start.”