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The Year Ahead

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Know your DCMS President Introducing Todd Pollock, MD

by Steven Harrell, director of communications

Looking back on the medical career of Todd Pollock, MD, it can be said that he worked his way up from the bottom — literally. While he was in junior high school, he took a job in the basement supply room of Presbyterian Hospital of Dallas, unloading and sorting shipments of medical supplies and delivering them to the correct floor.

“I wanted to work at the hospital and that was the only place they would hire someone my age,” he remembers. During high school, he moved up to the orthopaedic floor and then to the emergency room to work as an orderly.

His interest in medicine, though, began even earlier. His father, long-time DCMS member Harlan Pollock, MD, recalls finding three-year-old Todd lying on the floor and flipping through medical school textbooks for hours. When Todd was older, he accompanied his then-chief resident father on rounds through the emergency department of Parkland Hospital. Early on, he aspired to attend medical school and become a physician.

After graduating with a degree in psychology from the University of Texas and a degree in biology from Southern Methodist University, he began coursework at Chicago Medical School. Due to his prior experiences in the emergency department, Dr. Pollock entered medical school focused on a career in emergency medicine. But a conversation with his cousin, a first-year cardiologist, gave him important perspective.

“He told me to go into every residency as if that were going to be my specialty,” Dr. Pollock recalls. “He advised me to keep an open mind and be fully invested in each field. It was great advice, and in the end I found them all fascinating.”

By fully investing himself in a variety of specialties, Dr. Pollock opened himself up to some interesting experiences.

“During my third year as a medical student, I did my OB/GYN rotation at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. On my first night on call, the resident showed me how to deliver a baby. After that, I was essentially on my own.



Todd Pollock, MD, with his wife, Kasi, and daughter, Abby

“The first night, I delivered seven babies. It was the old ‘see one, do one, teach one’ — which probably wouldn’t go over well these days.”

Although such an incident could frighten a future physician out of the delivery room forever, Dr. Pollock took the experience differently.

“After one shift, I decided that’s what I wanted to do,” he says. “Then, after eight weeks of delivering babies all night — every third night — the excitement wore off. But, my experience did serve me well a few years later.”

Later in his career, as a surgery resident at Parkland Hospital, Dr. Pollock self-proclaims that he set the record for a non-obstetrician delivering the most babies outside a proper delivery room. “Four times,” he says. “Twice in the lobby of Parkland Hospital and twice in the parking lot.”

Despite the long hours and the emotional stresses that come with residency, Dr. Pollock remembers his time at UT Southwestern fondly.

“Those were some of the best times of my life,” he recalls. “The camaraderie I developed is still very important to me. I met many of my closest friends during my surgery residency, including my wife.” Kasi was working as an RN at Children’s Medical Center in Dallas while Dr. Pollock was doing his rotation in pediatric surgery. They married during his fourth year of residency.

By the end of his time at Parkland, Dr. Pollock had decided to specialize in plastic surgery, explaining that he was drawn to the unique combination of technical precision and creative license that plastic surgery allows. After he completed his general surgery residency, the newlywed couple moved to Chicago so Dr. Pollock could undertake a residency at the University of Chicago in plastic and reconstructive surgery.

“We loved Chicago,” he says. “Kasi and I still try to visit as often as we can and consider it our second home.”



Drs. Harlan and Todd Pollock perform surgery in the operating room of their practice.

When they considered his career options, Dr. Pollock and Kasi were guided by their values. Citing the importance of family, in 1997 the couple moved back to Dallas, where both his and Kasi's families live. Dr. Pollock joined his father in practice at North Dallas Plastic Surgery Associates.

"It made sense to return to Dallas and work in a private practice."

Dr. Pollock knows that family businesses don't always work out.

"It can be great, but I've also heard of disasters," he says. "Because of our mutual respect for each other, my professional relationship with my father has worked very well. He never treated me like a kid or a new doctor. He actively encouraged my participation in the decision-making process of the practice and respected my knowledge. It also gave me the opportunity to learn from someone I respect and whom I knew had my best interest at heart."

The father-and-son team has been very successful. For example, one day Todd noticed that when Harlan performed abdominoplasties, he would place a series of sutures that Todd had not seen before. Further, Harlan did not utilize drainage tubes. Todd then realized that none of his father's patients experienced fluid collections that are common to the procedure.

The father and son began to work together to modify and formalize this technique to make it easier for other surgeons to reproduce. They reviewed their experience and wrote up their findings, which were published in one of the premier plastic surgery journals. They have modified their technique to be used in other operations and further studied its implications in abdominoplasty — leading to many more publications, national and international speaking engagements and the opportunity to teach courses at national meetings. "It has been very gratifying to be able to contribute to my field in a meaningful way," he says.

Dr. Pollock became involved in DCMS leadership through service on the Nominating Committee and as chair of the

"I want DCMS to be a valuable asset that our members look to for guidance in these changing times, and support medicine with far-reaching advocacy and education efforts."

the Board of Censors. He believes that membership in the county medical society is one of the most important ways a physician can stand up for medicine.

"Medicine, by nature, happens on the local level," he says. "Fundamentally, our work takes place in the context of a relationship between a physician and a patient. In the same way, nothing is more important than local politics because it is focused on the end user. We are here — on the ground — the end users of all of the broad policy decisions that happen in Washington, DC, and Austin.

"Further, medicine is a team sport, so to speak. We train in a collegial, group setting. We practice in partnerships. We refer to each other; we need each other. Why wouldn't we also participate in an organization that provides opportunities to interact socially, to advocate for our profession and our patients, and to continue our education together? These are the goals of DCMS, and I am proud to have the opportunity to further all these relationships in 2014."

Dr. Pollock has been in practice long enough to know that the practice of medicine is always changing. Since well before being elected 2014 DCMS president, he has paid close attention to healthcare reform.

"I see the implementation of the Affordable Care Act as the major issue that DCMS will face in 2014," he predicts. "My hope is that we can utilize our resources — our members, our board, our staff, and our reputation — to meet these challenges in a way that champions our physicians and patients alike. I want DCMS to be a valuable asset that our members look to for guidance in these changing times, and support medicine with far-reaching advocacy and education efforts."

Dr. Pollock also is an expert whistler, a closet rock star, a "passionate bad golfer," and an avid traveler and scuba diver. He claims that he and his wife Kasi make an excellent Trivial Pursuit team, as they both have an uncanny memory for anything trivial. He does admit, however, that their memories are not nearly as good for subjects that are less trivial. They live in Dallas and have one daughter, Abby, 13. DMJ

Dr. Pollock is a plastic surgeon at North Dallas Plastic Surgery Associates. He also serves as parliamentarian for the Texas Society of Plastic Surgeons and as Program Committee cochair for the Parkland Surgical Society. He has previously served as president of the Dallas Society of Plastic Surgeons, Medical Staff President at Presbyterian Hospital Allen, and chair of the DCMS Board of Censors.