

 **AUTHORITY MAGAZINE**



Dr. Kimberly J. Lee of Beverly Hills Facial Plastic Surgery Center: 5 Things
You Need To Know To Create a Highly Successful Private Practice
By: Luke Kervin | October 16, 2021

Beverly Hills-based, **Dr. Kimberly J. Lee**, is a Board-Certified Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, the residing director of Beverly Hills Facial Plastic Surgery Center, and one of the best kept secrets among Hollywood A-listers. Regarded as one of the top female facial plastic surgeons in Los Angeles, Dr. Lee's surgical expertise lies in her ability to achieve the most natural results with a focus on facial rejuvenation. Dr. Lee graduated from Stanford University with Honors and academic distinction, and was one of only 86 accomplished students accepted into the prestigious Stanford University School of Medicine, where she received her MD degree. Known for her dexterity, Dr. Lee found her passion in facial plastic surgery during a research year doing head and neck surgery. In 2008, as the Chief Resident of Surgery, Dr. Lee was the lead surgeon on the case of the woman who was mauled by a bear in Kern County, putting her and the complex case at the forefront of the media.

Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Before we dive in, our readers would love to "get to know you" a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your 'backstory' and how you ended up where you are?

As a young child, I always loved doing things with my hands, whether it was making jewelry out of beads or doing creative projects. I watched an episode of People's

Court on TV and knew that my calling wasn't arguing with others but I wanted to help people. More importantly, I wanted to get to know people. I love interacting with my patients and getting to know them as people! I once had a unique situation where a patient was mauled in the face by a bear and airlifted to UCLA, where I did her surgery. While there's no textbook or course on how to fix a face after a bear mauling, it was an exercise in going back to my childhood of being creative and using my hands to extrapolate from what I had learned to put the face back together again.

I'm a huge fan of mentorship throughout one's career. None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Who has been your biggest mentor? What was the most valuable lesson you learned from them?

I've been fortunate to have great mentors in my life. One of my biggest mentors from medical school once told me that in medicine you don't trust anyone, not even your own mother! Part of my personality is to double check (and sometimes triple and quadruple check especially when it comes to measurements) everything anyways. When you're dealing with someone's face, everything matters! The second thing he taught was to always do the right thing for the patient! It seems like such an obvious thing, but it's completely true. I don't cut corners because in the end, I have peace of mind knowing that I did the right thing for the patient.

What made you want to start your own practice? Can you tell us the story of how you started it?

I had several opportunities when I finished training, including being Chief of a hospital affiliated with an academic center, but ultimately I knew that long term I wanted flexibility. In addition to professional goals, I had personal goals of starting a family, and I knew that it would be very challenging to be successful at both if I didn't have flexibility to set my own schedule.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you began your career?

There are so many that I could write a book about my experiences! In terms of interesting cases, almost right after the bear lady I was called into the ER for a patient who had a nail in the hard palate of his mouth. He was a construction worker and here I was thinking it's a nail used to put up a picture on the wall. When I came into the hospital, I took one look at the x-ray and saw that it was a 3.5" nail that went from his hard palate, through his nose, to the eye socket. The nail literally missed his brain and his optic nerve, which would have made him blind, by less than a fraction of a millimeter each. After removing the nail, the man was completely unscathed as if nothing had happened.

Because it is a “helping profession”, some healthcare providers struggle with the idea of “monetization.” How do you address the business aspect of running a medical practice? Can you share a story or example?

I always think back to my mentor’s advice of “always do the right thing!” It really is much better to turn away a patient when I know it’s not for the right reasons, if I don’t think they’ll get the result they seek, or if the risks outweigh the benefits. I’m really fortunate in that I do what I do because I genuinely love what I do. I also sleep much better at night knowing that I did the right thing.

Managing being a provider and a business owner is a constant balancing act. How do you manage both roles?

It’s really funny to think of this this way, but in the end, for me, it’s always about doing the right thing for the patient. At the end of the day, it’s just not worth it to do something for money if it isn’t right. There’ve been multiple times where I’ve turned away patients who weren’t good candidates for procedures or when the risks outweigh the benefits.

From completing your degree to opening a practice and becoming a business owner, your path was most likely challenging. Can you share a story about one of your greatest struggles? Can you share what you did to overcome it?

There are so many challenges when starting a practice. In medical school and residency, our surgical and medical skills are honed, but no one ever teaches you how to run a practice. Like any business, I think it’s important to learn from the bottom up. When I started my practice, I wanted to know what people were asking for and what questions they were asking on the phone before coming in for a consultation, so I answered phone calls. A lot of times what’s obvious or common sense to me, isn’t the case for others so I really had to think about how to teach the staff about customer service, protecting patient’s privacy, and thinking ahead as to what each patient might need.

Ok, thank you. Here is the main question of our interview. What are the 5 things you need to know to create a thriving practice, and why? (Please share a story or example for each.)

1. Have patience. This is so important on multiple levels, from having patience to building a patient base, to learning about insurance and billing, to creating a strong team of support in the office. This builds the patient’s experience- starting from even before they come into the office to after they leave the office.
2. Have a vision and be able to adapt. Doctors are extremely busy, and some rely solely on their staff to keep them abreast of everything. However, it’s important to keep your finger on the pulse of treatments and procedures that are hot and new technologies. Doctors tend to be dinosaurs sometimes and resistant to change, but

the reality is we need to evolve to keep up with the world around us. A good example is incorporating the latest technology in the office. We have 3D computer imaging that allows us to make an avatar of our patients and make changes so that they can see what they might look like after surgery. Our hair camera for our hair loss patients undergoing PRP treatments counts and measures the thickness of every hair in the picture so that we can quantitatively monitor their progress. Another example, which was brought on by the recent pandemic, was offering virtual consultations. This forced us to adapt and make our paperwork digital and do our consultations via zoom. Now, we do this for all of our patients even if they are local to be more efficient. We've also changed our workflow in the office to eliminate as much paper as we can and do everything on iPads. It's required that we take the time to learn and adapt, but ultimately it will lead to a more efficient and environmentally sound process.

3. Care about your patients and see them as people! Sometimes doctors are taught to separate themselves from their patients but I really like to get to know my patients, their families, their careers and challenges. I think it allows me to be a better doctor for them because I can understand what they are seeking and what their goals are and how that might fit into their lifestyles. For example, my celebrity patients require treatments that have minimal down time and really no margin of error. They would rather sacrifice a little bit of the results for a significant decrease in risk. After surgeries, I like to call the patients myself, or sometimes I'll have the staff do it, just to check in and make sure they are doing ok and answer any questions they might have. Furthermore, I like to see my patients on a pretty regular schedule after surgery to make sure everything is healing as it should.

4. Seek advice from someone who's already done it. Ok, so this is an important one. It's always nice to ask your colleagues who you trust for advice because they've probably already experienced it. There's a wealth of knowledge to be imparted and you don't have to reinvent the wheel. When I was a resident at UCLA, one of the community doctors would always come and give a lecture on the things he learned while building a practice, and he told us he's still building even though it's been 30 years! He shared a lot of practical advice and all of his patient forms. These just aren't things that are taught in residency because forms are taken care of by the hospital. Whether it's something as simple as recommending an answering service or questions about consents, it doesn't hurt to learn vicariously through someone who's already been through it.

5. Always do the right thing for the patient. There's nothing more comfortable than being able to sleep with your legs stretched out at night. It just isn't worth it to be motivated to do something for the wrong reasons. I'm fortunate to have been selected to become a doctor who can help so many people. The most gratifying thing is knowing that you've helped someone — whether it was a reconstructive case like the bear mauling victim or a domestic violence victim or a cosmetic patient who just wanted to feel better about themselves.

As a business owner you spend most of your time working IN your practice, seeing patients. When and how do you shift to working ON your practice? (Marketing,

upgrading systems, growing your practice, etc.) How much time do you spend on the business elements?

Early on when I started my practice, I had more time to work on building my practice. Thank goodness for the internet, because I was able to research and learn about a lot of the marketing and business elements. In fact, I designed my first website and did my own SEO back in the day. As my practice has grown, I unfortunately don't have the time to do this anymore. I'm glad that I was able to learn the fundamentals early on, but as we've grown, I've had to outsource and rely on my team to help me. I can't be the expert of everything, and it's more critical that I stay at the forefront of techniques and technological advances for my patients and have my team of experts help me for everything else not patient related.

I understand that the healthcare industry has unique stresses and hazards that other industries don't have. What specific practices would you recommend to other healthcare leaders to improve their physical or mental wellness? Can you share a story or example? Great question! This topic has been particularly important during the recent ongoing pandemic. It's easy to become burned out or feel like your patients consume your life sometimes. Part of it is because I genuinely love my patients, so it was common earlier on for me to call my patients back at night, weekends, or even during vacations. Balance is important and being able to do things outside of medicine is important. For example, I like to play golf. I don't usually get to play so much here in LA, but when I do get to play, I forget about everything around me for that round except for trying to get the golf ball in the hole in the least number of strokes! Having that little bit of time away allows you to stop and smell the roses and come back with fresh eyes and even more focus.

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share a story about how that was relevant in your own life?

"Be the best you can be and use it to help someone else." I've always worked hard to be the best I could be. I wasn't motivated by others but it was a self-motivation to be the best I could be. When I was at Stanford, I wanted to explore all the opportunities I could that were available (and there were a lot)!

<https://medium.com/authority-magazine/dr-kimberly-j-lee-of-beverly-hills-facial-plastic-surgery-center-5-things-you-need-to-know-to-cre-fd6fa15e5bc>