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ASSOCIATION OF CUTANEOUS SURGEONS INDIA

Concept to Clinic: The Ultimate Guide to DERMATOSURGERY PRACTICE MANAGEMENT



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Contents

Section 1: Introduction to Dermatosurgery

1.1 Historical Context and Evolution of Dermatosurgery 3
Chethan RH

1.2 Scope of Dermatosurgery Today 8
Vignesh Narayan R, Shilpa K

1.3 Importance of Effective Practice Management 16
Preethi B Nayak, Vivek M Pai

1.4 Basic Principles of Dermatosurgery 27
Priya Prem

Section 2: Everything You Need to Know before Setting up Your First Clinic

2.1 Location Selection 41
Aakash Gupta

2.2 Infrastructure: Small, Medium, and Large Practice 49
Ranjan Jeevannavar, Sridevi Raichur

2.3 Design: Minor Operating Theater and Major Operating Theater 55
Priya Prem, Apoorva V Bharadwaj

2.4 Capital Investment 67
Ranjan Jeevannavar

2.5 Licenses, Laws, and Accreditations 72
Praveen Kumar SP

2.6 Equipment Procurement 88

2.6.1 Scalpel and Blades *89*
Kinnera Boina, Kusuma MR

2.6.2 Forceps and Clamps *95*
Kinnera Boina, Kusuma MR

2.6.3 Sutures and Needles *106*
Kinnera Boina, Kusuma MR

2.6.4 Electrosurgical Devices *115*
Shruti Bidarkar

2.6.5 Laser Devices *125*
Chaithra Shenoy, Sanket Nehete

2.7 Technology and Electronic Health Record Management Software **133**
Praveen Kumar SP

2.8 Photography **138**
Ojas D Kulkarni

2.9 Operation Theater Sterilization Protocols **153**
Kusuma MR, Poornima HR

2.10 Biomedical Waste Management **164**
Sonal Jain

Section 3: Know Your Patient

3.1 Patient Assessment, Informed Consent, and Video Consent **177**
Varsha R Koti

3.2 Managing High-profile Clients **185**
Divya Gorur K, Anjana Mohan

3.3 Ethical Practice and a Patient-centered Decision **190**
Venkataram Mysore, Pooja Kanumuru

3.4 Building Trust and Patient Satisfaction **197**
Niti Khunger

Section 4: Beyond the Procedure: Recovery, Comfort, and Education

4.1 Postoperative Care **205**
Savitha AS

4.2 Pain Management **211**
Abishek Kumar KV, Savitha AS

4.3 Patient Education **216**
Shruthi Chikkaiah, Savitha AS

Section 5: Special Considerations

5.1 Effective Consultation and Management in Pediatric Dermatosurgery **225**
Rashmi Agarwal, Madura C, Mehak Singh

5.2 Geriatric Dermatologic Surgery **240**
Shilpa K

5.3 Dermatologic Surgery in Immunocompromised Patients **246**
Shashikumar BM, Savitha AS, Mehrin Samed

5.4 Dermatosurgery in Polypharmacy Patients **256**
Biju Vasudevan, Meghana Reddy

Section 6: Spreading Your Horizons

6.1 Growth Opportunities: Horizontal and Vertical **265**
Vishal Chugh

6.2 Streamlining Workflow and Operations in Procedure Floor and Time Management **274**
Harsha Siddappa, Shruthi Chikkaiah, Madura C

6.3 Fellowship, Observership, and Training Programs **279**
Harsha Siddappa

6.4 Interaction with Dermatologists and the Pharmaceutical Industry **286**
BS Chandrashekar

Section 7: Human Resource Management

7.1 Recruitment and Training **295**
Shehnaz Arsiwala, Nazneen Arsiwala

7.2 Team Building and Leadership **301**
T Salim, BS Chandrashekar

7.3 Performance Evaluation and Career Development in Healthcare Setup **310**
Pradeep Kumari, Nitin Jain, Garbham Sravani

7.4 Contracts and Payroll in a Dermatology Hospital **318**
Praveen Kumar SP

7.5 Role of Operation Theater Staff and Technicians **323**
Anwita Sinha, Shekhar Neema

Section 8: Financial Management

8.1 Budgeting and Financial Planning in Dermatology Practices **333**
Nitin G Barde

8.2 Billing and Getting Paid **337**
Harish Prasad BR, Nitin G Barde

8.3 Revenue Cycle Management in Dermatology Practices in India **353**
Nitin G Barde

8.4 Cost Control Measures and Profitability Analysis **358**
Govind S Mittal

Section 9: Marketing and Patient Acquisition

9.1 Branding and Positioning in Dermatology: Building a Distinct Identity 373
Jagdish Sakhiya, Dhruv Sakhiya, Sneha Rathi, Bhautik Sardhara

9.2 Referral Network Development 378
Yogesh M Bhingradia, Sapna Solanki Parekh

9.3 Ethical Considerations in Dermatosurgery Marketing 385
Pradyumna Vaidya, Vijay Joshi

9.4 Digital Marketing Strategies and Online Platform Reviews for Dermatologists in India 397
Priyanka Sutariya

Section 10: Medicolegal in Dermatosurgery Practice

10.1 Understanding Legal Obligations and Liabilities 413
Subodh Sirur

10.2 Risk Management and Medication Strategies 418
Aneesh Samayam, Roshan Manoharan

10.3 Documentation and Record-Keeping Practices 428
Jagadish P, Nandhini T

10.4 Legal Angle of Informed Consent 435
KH Satyanarayana Rao

10.5 Malpractice and Liability Insurance 439
Akshay Samagani

10.6 Addressing Professional Challenges in Implementing Safe Practice 447
D Dinesh Kumar

Section 11: Future Directions in Dermatosurgery

11.1 Emerging Technologies and Techniques 459
Shrruthi Velavan, Shreya K Gowda, Somesh Gupta

11.2 Trends in Patient Care and Management 474
Maj Gen Dr Manas Chatterjee, Surbhi Rajput

11.3 Adaptation to the Changing Healthcare Landscape 480
Sacchidanand Sarvajnamurthy Aradhya, Sujala Sacchidanand Aradhya

Section 12: For All Dermatosurgeon Entrepreneurs

12.1 An Idea and a Dream—A Story of Wondering and Wandering **487**
Venkataram Mysore

12.2 Expanding from a Single Doctor to a Super Specialty Setup **494**
BS Chandrashekar

12.3 Opening Multiple Centers **499**
Dhananjay K Chavan, Dhanraj D Chavan

12.4 Understanding Financial Statements and Raising Capital **507**
Jagdish Sakhiya, Dhruv Sakhiya, Ravi Khambhati

12.5 Reality Check before You Launch Your Dream Business **521**
Amit Kelkar

12.6 Pearls, Pitfalls, and Practical Business Tips for Aspiring Dermatosurgeons **527**
Aseem Sharma

12.7 Lessons Learnt from Real-life Clinic Experiences **535**
Sharad Mutalik, Shibhani Sudheer Hegde

12.8 Strategies for Growth and Sustainability of a Dermatosurgery Practice in India **539**
BS Chandrashekar

12.9 Hope for the Best, Prepare for the Worst **544**
Niti Khunger

12.10 Education and Research as a Part of Your Mission **549**
Gulhima Arora, Sandeep Arora

Index **559**

Reality Check before You Launch Your Dream Business

Amit Kelkar

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KEY MESSAGES

- *Prepare beyond passion*: Launching your dream clinic requires more than enthusiasm—it needs detailed planning, awareness of legal and operational challenges, and readiness for setbacks.
- *Invest in yourself*: Continuously upgrade your clinical, surgical, and aesthetic skills through CME, workshops, and peer learning. A balanced personal life is essential to avoid burnout.
- *Clinic setup is strategic*: Location, design, accessibility, and team selection are crucial to patient experience and retention. Your clinic environment significantly influences trust and satisfaction.
- *Know the legal and financial landscape*: Obtain all necessary licenses (e.g., clinical establishment, biomedical waste, GST), choose the right business structure [limited liability partnership (LLP), Public Limited Company (PLC), or proprietorship], and track finances responsibly.
- *Marketing is evolving*: While traditional methods work, leveraging digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Google, and patient management tools is the key in today's practice growth. Ethical social media presence is essential to counter misinformation.

INTRODUCTION

"Congratulations on taking the bold step toward building your dream clinic!"

While stories of global icons such as Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg, and Indian industrial giants such as the Tatas and Ambanis, are undeniably inspirational, it is equally motivating to reflect on the journeys of medical visionaries who turned challenges into legacies. For instance, Dr Devi Shetty, a renowned cardiac surgeon, transformed healthcare accessibility by founding Narayana Health in 2000—an institution known for high-quality, low-cost cardiac care.

Similarly, Dr TMA Pai, a pioneering physician, educationist, and philanthropist, established Kasturba Medical College in 1953, India's first self-financing medical college and later Manipal Institute of Technology, laying the foundation for the Manipal Education and Medical Group. Their journeys were far from easy—they were marked by vision, setbacks, resilience, and relentless effort.

Just like them, your path to establishing a successful clinic will not be a smooth sprint but a long marathon filled with challenges, learning curves, and critical decisions. So, it is essential to do a reality check, try to find out the prerequisites, anticipate shortcomings, and prepare for inevitable setbacks. Being aware and proactive ensures that you are not caught off guard when difficulties arise but instead meet them with strategy and strength—not as a bolt from the blue, but as steps in your own story of success.

The reality check can be considered under the following headings:

- Doctor/yourself
- Clinic
- Patients
- Permissions and licenses
- Finances
- Marketing

DOCTOR/YOURSELF

In our style of practice in India, we need to be master of all trades, managing clinical dermatology to aesthetics to lasers to dermatosugery.

The practice of medicine, especially dermatology, is ever-evolving. One needs to be updated about newer medications, machines, newer terminologies either by journals, CMEs, webinars and conferences, and hands-on workshops. If you feel you are lacking certain skills such as injecting Botox or fillers or understanding lasers, never feel shy about attending courses of the above even if you have your juniors in the training batch. We are all students our entire life and learn from one another.

One must ensure that the degree is recognized by the National Medical Council.

Please ensure that you are a permanent member of the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL), or other societies such as Association of Cutaneous Surgeons and Hair Restoration Society. It entitles you to receive the journals, attend conferences at subsidized rates, provide a platform to present your work, and network with your colleagues. Also, in case of litigations or complaints from patients or medicolegal complications, your fraternity is there to support you. In addition, the DVL welfare trust gives you life coverage too. Therefore, be sure to enroll for it.

Lastly, one must ensure a good work–life balance. Please ensure to give time for recreation and health. All work and no play make Jack a dull boy! Besides patients and clinic, do not forget to invest in yourself. Listening to music, watching a movie, enjoying a karaoke session, catching up with friends for coffee are sureshot stress busters. An hour of badminton/tennis, a swim for 30 minutes,

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a walk in the park, a trek on weekends, or a zumba session in rotation will surely ensure your fitness too and avoid burnouts in the long run.

CLINIC

The most important aspect of a clinic is the *location*. The clinic should be easily visible to potential patients/clients, preferably on a main street, with your consulting board easily visible from the road and nearer to public transport like the metro or bus/auto stand. It should be ideally located close to your home (or buy a home close to your clinic!) to cut short the travel time or avoid getting stuck in the peak traffic hours, especially in a metropolis, so that you can easily pop up at home for a quick lunch/rest or drop your kids to school or go for a gym workout.

PATIENTS

Try to have a clinic which gives positive vibes to the patient. A good lighting, windows, signages, public toilet, secure rooms, air conditioners/coolers, and cleanliness adds to it.

Ensure that you have a good receptionist and assistants as they are your first contact with the patients. Pay them well; consider them as a part of your team and just not your employee. A happy doctor with a happy assistant will surely ensure a happy patient!

Try to minimize the waiting time of patients. Better to have separate timings for consultations and procedures as some procedures take a lot of time and it is unfair to keep outpatient department (OPD) patients waiting.

Also, a sincere advice to all the young ones starting your practice—ensure a good OPD base. The OPD is from where your procedure patients are going to come. Once you build a rapport with the patient and gain their trust, they will get procedures done from you. Otherwise, you always have window-shopping patients who keep shifting from clinic to clinic. A satisfied patient is the best mascot for your clinic. There is no doubt that this is a slow marketing process than Instagram or Facebook, but very profitable for those who plan to play a test innings and not a T20 match.

Try to analyze the current market trends, what the patients actually want, and where is the deficit between the patient's needs and what a doctor is actually giving. One can do a market research by polls on social media, talking with your friends, relatives in the neighborhood, or even the pharmacists at the medical shops. Identify the target audience—whether it is the general public or specialized care seekers.

PERMISSIONS AND LICENCES

This is a very important part of your checklist. One must ensure that they have all mandatory permissions to avoid legal issues and operational difficulties.

- *Clinical establishment registration*: It is the primary license needed to operate the clinic to ensure compliance with healthcare standards. Each state has

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its own rules, and the process to be followed to obtain the license varies accordingly.

- *State medical council registration*: After passing MD or diploma, the degree needs to be registered by the state medical council and one should obtain the degree registration certificate.
- *Biomedical waste disposal (BMW) registration*: This is absolutely mandatory for clinics as per the biomedical waste management rules, 2016. The central pollution control board has guidelines for the process of handling, segregating, storing, transport, and disposal of biomedical waste generated in the healthcare facility. One needs to apply to the state pollution control board. On acceptance, a unique barcode reference number and registration number from the corporation is issued. Annual subscription charges are to be paid and BMW annual certificate is to be obtained yearly.
- *GST registration*: It is absolutely essential if one does plan to set up an aesthetic/cosmetic clinic dealing with botulinum toxin injections/fillers/high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU)/threads/hair transplant, and other aesthetic procedures. Proper guidance and regular filing of returns from a good chartered accountant are of vital importance.
- *Trademark registration and logo designing*: It is not mandatory to register your clinic for trademark. But if one does plan to create a big brand name/open multiple centers, it is advisable to do the trademark registration. There are specialist trademark attorneys who will do the process like doing a search report, publishing in newspapers, respond to any objections raised, and attend hearings if any. The whole process may take up to 2–3 months. Once registered, the certificate will be valid for 5 years and then can be renewed.
- *Pharmacy registration*: Many doctors plan to open a pharmacy in their own clinic for the huge perks associated with it. But substantial paperwork and compliances are essential. For opening a pharmacy, the following are needed:
    - *Registered pharmacist* is the one who has completed his D Pharm or M Pharm and is registered under the Pharmacy act. At no time can medicines be dispensed if a pharmacist is not available at the shop.
    - *Retail drug license/pharmacy license* is given by the Drug Control Organization and relevant state authority.
    - *Clinical establishment registration*: As per the Clinical Establishment Act, if a clinic is registered, the pharmacy needs to be registered too.
    - GST registration is also must for pharmacy.
    - *Premises proof*: Proof of ownership of area/lease deed
    - Blueprint of pharmacy layout
    - Nonconviction affidavit
    - *Space requirements*: Minimum area of 10 sq m or 100 sq ft
    - *Storage*: For medicines, refrigerator, and air conditioning
    - Drug inventory management
    - Compliance with drug laws

Starting a pharmacy is no doubt very luring but all above-mentioned points need to be followed for the smooth functioning. A specific dedicated time needs to be allocated daily by the doctor to run a pharmacy successfully.

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- *Shop Act Registration*: This again varies from state to state. Under the Maharashtra Shops and Establishment Act 2017, medical practitioners, clinics, and polyclinics that employ <10 persons are exempted from applicability of this act. But those that employ 10 or more must register under this act and comply with its requirements in terms of working hours/leaves. Registering for the shop act provides a legal recognition of the practice and adds to the credibility.

FINANCES

Well, starting a business comes at its own cost! It is ideal to first make a list of all anticipated costs. Accordingly, total investments needed can be calculated. The broad heads for calculations are as follows:

- *Clinic space*: Purchased or leased
- Renovation and furniture expenses
- *Medical equipment*: From peels/microdermabrasion/dermoscope to lasers and HIFU. —Well, it just goes on and on!
- Staff salaries
- License and permission fees
- Marketing expenses
- Utilities and maintenance costs

A big question for newly started practice is whether to go for a LLP, limited liability company (LLC), or sole proprietorship.

- *LLP* is a partnership done with at least two individuals. If a doctor couple, siblings, or colleagues are starting the clinic, a LLP can be considered wherein the individuals are business partners. A LLP is a separate legal entity for small businesses or professional services. LLP protects personal assets and has certain tax benefits.
- *Private limited company*: It is recommended for larger clinics having substantial financial turnover and those planning investing in medical equipment.
- *Sole proprietorship*: This is the best option for those who plan on going solo or want to work alone. Those who are starting clinics and the annual gross receipts are expected to be <75 lakh, be sure to avail the Section 44ADA of the Income Tax Act which is for specified professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and architects. As per this act, provisional income tax needs to be paid on just half of the income under presumptive taxation.
- Ultimately which route to follow is best judged by individual needs and a detailed consultation with a good lawyer and a financial consultant.

Current versus Savings Account

It is always wise to open a current account for the clinic for the daily transactions as there is no limit on the number of daily transactions. There are other added advantages such as digital banking, automated payments (such as electricity, telephone bills, or salary to staff), receiving e-statements, credit/debit card payments by patients, and overdraft facility (can request funds from bank in case

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you are falling short of cash). Disadvantages as compared to the savings account are no interest received on money in account and the minimum balance to be maintained is much higher.

Savings account is ideal for an individual or a salaried doctor.

MARKETING YOUR PRACTICE

There is a paradigm shift in the way of marketing your practice. The age-old methods of meeting general practitioners for referrals, attachment with charitable hospitals, pamphlets in newspapers, or writeups in newspapers still exist. But in metropolitan cities and urban areas, Instagram, Facebook, and Google instantly make your presence felt on social media. These methods surely help the youngsters to reach out to a larger audience but with their own merits and demerits.

Making a clinic's page on Instagram and Facebook, providing latest updates about the procedures done in the clinic and the exclusivity about it, information reels, and boost advertisements surely make your presence felt. There can be interactive comments or contact me/direct me (DM) from the followers and potential clients (called patients in the old world).

One can team up with professional social media management agencies, which will help market your practice—right from search engine optimization (SEO) to managing your Google reviews. Well, nothing in this world is for free. They charge on monthly or yearly basis. How much to pay is up to the individual. Those with heavy rents, investments on machines, bank EMIs, and practicing in urban areas definitely need to use these options.

Patient management platforms such as PRACTO, which help you to reach out to people and people reach out to you, can surely be sought. One definitely needs to read all terms and conditions in detail before signing in.

And of course, you always have the competition from influencers (mostly nondermats, nondoctors) on Instagram/Facebook who have the magical capability to influence the gullibles into following many things and selling all sorts of stuffs, from rice water to snail slimes, with absolutely no ethical responsibility.

We, the dermatologists, definitely have a social responsibility to be on these social media and guide the people toward evidence-based facts and treatments.

CONCLUSION

Hence, above-mentioned are various headings under which one can do a reality check during the process of starting one's clinic. It is not the final list but as we move ahead and evolve and as per an individual's experiences, new additions surely need to be done to the above list.

Wishing you all the best for your new venture!

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Concept to Clinic: The Ultimate Guide to
DERMATOSURGERY PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

Salient Features

- This book serves as an end-to-end reference tool for entrepreneurial dermatosurgeons to establish and grow a clinic
- Comprehensive coverage of dermatosurgery—from history to future directions
- Step-by-step guidance on clinic setup, infrastructure, equipment, and protocols
- Patient-centered approach with emphasis on consent, ethics, and postoperative care
- Special considerations for pediatric, geriatric, and special cases
- Practical insights on HR, finance, medicolegal aspects, marketing, and business growth



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Shelving Recommendation
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