

GERALD GOLDBERG, MD '78

## Laser Treatment Pioneer

**D**uring his 37-year career, dermatologist Gerald Goldberg, MD '78, has pioneered the use of lasers, treating complicated conditions ranging from vascular birthmarks in children to extreme rhinophyma—a skin condition causing the nose to become red, bumpy, and bulbous, particularly in older men (ie, the “W.C. Fields nose”).

Certified in more than 25 laser modalities, Dr. Goldberg is considered one of the country's foremost experts in dermatologic laser surgery. In 2017, he received the Leon Goldman Memorial Award for excellence in laser medicine and in 2019, was awarded the Ellet H. Drake Memorial Award for innovative laser work, both lifetime achievement awards from the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery (ASLMS).

A native of suburban Syracuse, Goldberg graduated cum laude from Princeton University then attended Upstate Medical University, where he was elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society. He completed his residency in pediatrics and fellowship in dermatology, both at the University of Arizona. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Society of Laser Medicine and Surgery, and the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, and past president of the Arizona Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery Society.

Goldberg became interested in lasers early in his career as a means to treat birthmarks in babies and children. “From the beginning, I got involved in the intersection of pediatrics and dermatology, working with kids with birthmarks especially port-wine stains (PWS), which has become one of my passions,” he says.

He never touched a laser during his dermatology training, but in the mid 1980s, laser technology emerged as a means to ablate lesions, remodel skin, remove tattoos, and destroy blood vessels. Goldberg became an early adopter and then an expert, adding treatment modalities and innovative ways to use lasers as laser technologies advanced. “Not many people were doing laser treatment in the beginning,” he says.

While birthmarks such as PWS had long been considered disfiguring and untreatable without surgical excision, new technologies emerged with a new paradigm of “selective photothermolysis”: adjusting the wavelength, pulse duration, and power to ablate the target and not hurt the surrounding tissues. “Our goal is to try to get port wine stain birthmarks clear in the first year of life, when we can treat our infants without general anesthesia,” says Goldberg, founder of Pima Dermatology in Tucson, Arizona. “We do treatment most often in the office over multiple sessions, and in many cases, the birthmark can remain clear for a lifetime.”

Goldberg has played an active role in laser advancements, testing out new technology for manufacturers. “I have two new devices in my office now that I’m testing,” he says. “One of my favorite things is learning ways of doing things with newer devices, device combinations, and new ways to use old devices.”

Despite the early emphasis on pediatric laser procedures, Goldberg’s practice expanded through the years to offer an extensive array of dermatological medical, surgical and cosmetic services to patients of all ages. “It’s never boring,” he says. “I see babies and I see 100-year-olds. Who would ever think that a pediatrician would be taking care of fancy ladies’ wrinkles?”

At age 70, Goldberg is now practicing only two days a week, focusing almost exclusively on laser patients, teaching laser techniques to residents and fellows from University of Arizona Medical School, where he is clinical professor of dermatology and pediatrics. He has lectured in three languages on four continents over



Gerald Goldberg is a pioneer in dermatologic laser surgery.



his career, and most recently, has been giving Zoom lectures for residency programs across the country. He remains very active lecturing for the ASLMS, most recently sharing techniques through “Laser Video Pearls” that are posted on the ASLMS international on-line learning center.

Goldberg now has more time to devote to his many hobbies—he is an avid photographer, enjoys tennis, biking, travel, and spending time with his children and four grandchildren. His daughter is a public health consultant, and his son, also a dermatologist and dermatopathologist, works for a biotechnology firm studying markers aiding the diagnosis and prognosis for melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma.

“It’s been a very satisfying career caring for the whole spectrum of patients,” Goldberg says. “I now see the children of the kids I took care of early in my practice, which is kind of amazing.”

—Renée Gearhart Levy