

CHRISTINE YANG FINNIN, MD '14

Skin Specialist

Early in her medical education, Christine Yang Finnin, MD '14, found herself fascinated by lectures on the skin and slides of skin lesions. "I'm a very visual person and found them interesting to look at," she recalls. "I was interested in how the skin reflects a lot of what is going on internally."

With no academic department of dermatology at Upstate, Dr. Finnin knew she'd have to be proactive if she wanted to pursue the competitive specialty. The summer after her first year, she participated in an endocrinology research project on polycystic ovary syndrome that looked at hirsutism and acne. She spent time shadowing in the local office of clinical faculty members Ramsay Farah, MD '95, and Joyce Farah, MD '01. Although she considered radiology and psychiatry, by the time third-year clinical rotations were complete, Finnin was set on dermatology, securing away rotations at Columbia University, University of California-Irvine, and Georgetown.

Those efforts paid off. Finnin completed her residency in dermatology at New York Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center in Manhattan in June 2018 and is now the sole clinician and medical director at Integrated Dermatology in Latham, New York.

Integrated Dermatology is the largest independent dermatology practice in the United States and had recently acquired the Schenectady-area practice before bringing Finnin on board. "It's exciting to be the first Integrated Dermatology practice in New York State and I believe our patients will benefit from access to the best clinical care available," she says.

The location was a key draw. During her residency, Finnin was married to Dan Finnin, MD '15, who had been a year behind her at Upstate. He was in the Navy, and after completing his intern year, was assigned to the Navy clinic in Saratoga Springs, New York, serving as the only general practitioner for military personnel in the area.

"We'd been living apart, so finding this opportunity in the Capital Region was perfect," Finnin says.

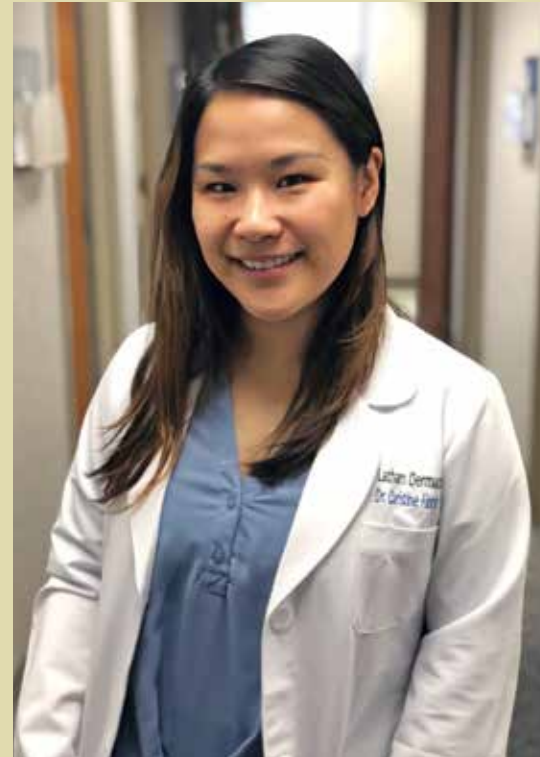
In February, the couple welcomed their first child, a baby girl, and in July, Dan began an emergency medicine residency at Albany Medical Center.

At Finnin's new practice, her focus is on medical dermatology, serving a population that is largely older and Caucasian and at high risk for skin cancer. "That's the bread and butter of what I do every day, but what I love about dermatology is the variety. You get to do a lot of different things—aesthetics, procedures, pediatrics," she says.

Finnin says she feels well prepared for solo practice by her residency at Columbia, which attracted complex patients from all over the world. "We had a very busy consult service and saw many immune-compromised patients, whether from cancer, transplant, or HIV," she says.

During her last year of residency, Finnin spent a month in Hue, Vietnam, where she served as an attending physician at a clinic with no formally trained dermatologist, both seeing patients and training medical students and other physicians. "It was really interesting to practice in a place that was resource poor yet still try to provide good care," she says. "I was impressed with what they were able to do with such few resources."

Finnin's advice to aspiring dermatologists? "It's best if you can determine that interest sooner rather than later," she says. "If you have any inkling that's the path you want, try to get involved with some kind of related research and find a dermatologist you can shadow," she says. "Study hard and get as many honors in your rotations as you can. Score well on Step 1. Even though a lot of programs say they don't have a score cut off, they probably do, even unofficially."



Christine Yang Finnin, MD '14

Finnin says she's still attracted to the visual aspect of her work. "There's an immediate gratification to being able to look at something and identify what it is," she says.

But she says the greatest benefit is the variety of opportunity her specialty provides. "There's so many different subspecialties you can focus on," she says. "I like doing a little of everything. But it's so early in my career, we'll see how it's going to evolve."

—Renée Gearhart Levy