

Q&A with Acclaimed Dr. Gary Alter, World Renowned Plastic Surgeon

An in-depth look into the life of the talented and revolutionary plastic surgeon.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, December 20, 2018 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Q. A pleasure speaking with you Dr. Alter. So, where were you born?

A. The pleasure is mine. I was born in Chicago, Illinois. My family moved to San Jose when I was 10 years old. I grew up there until college, when I went to UC Berkley, then going to medical school at UCLA, then two years of general surgery at UCLA, and 4 years of urology training.

Q. Had medicine been in your family at all?

A. My dad had been accepted to medical school before WW2, but he never went back after the war. He always pushed me to go the route of medicine, but you have to pick up the push or you're never going to make it.



Plastic Surgeon Dr. Gary Alter

Q. After making the decision to go to medical school, when did you decide to turn your attention to plastic surgery?

A. Well, after my urology training, I practiced urology for 10 years in California. During that time period, I realized I didn't want to spend the rest of my career as a urologist, because I noticed challenges in the area of genital surgery that were being unaddressed. I also drifted away from urology because it was becoming less surgical and more medical with the development of technology.

In the 80s, I made the decision to study as a plastic surgeon with my background on urology allowing me to approach some of the challenges that were unaddressed. The interview process was difficult, but I managed to be accepted to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. I did 2 years there, then further advanced training.

Q. You have become one of the visionaries in genital reconstruction. Would you say this is

correct?

A. I had a vision of combining both practices, but I also wanted to do regular genital cosmetic surgery. My ultimate vision was to solve issues that hadn't been addressed. After my studies, I came back to L.A., but people that knew me as a urologist felt I didn't know anything in the realm of plastic surgery.

It took at least 10 years to break that cycle where people recognized me as a plastic surgeon and not just a urologist.

I was fortunate enough to work with a reconstructive urologist, and together we worked on some great cases where we made contributions to the field. I designed some procedures that had never even been thought of before.

Q. How was the reaction of the medical community to your pioneering style and work?

A. I did some sexual reassignment surgeries, and at the time those were pretty revolutionary. At one point in time, I think I was the only person in Los Angeles that was doing them. No one looked at me strangely, but I was definitely unique because I was one of the only ones that went from being a urologist to a fully trained plastic surgeon. It made me a unique entity. People would even send me their cases for my input.

Q. What was the tipping point in becoming the world-renowned expert you are today?

A. There's no tipping point. It was just a matter of time and a lot of patience. I was fortunate that the internet started coming into popularity, seeing as I was one of the only ones with a [website](#). Seems strange to say that now.

Q. What do you think the future of your field is, in the next 5 or 10 years?

A. I'm thinking the popularity and awareness will only get magnified in time. When I developed some of my procedures, people said there was no future in it, that nobody cared. They were completely wrong. It's one of the fastest developing branches of surgery. A problem we have now, however, is that there are doctors doing these procedures that aren't completely trained. I think that's disastrous.

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