



# TREASURE COAST DERMATOLOGY

*Specializing in the Treatment of Skin Cancer*

February 12, 2021

## DEAR PATIENTS:

As many of you know every year I write a letter talking about what's been going on over the past year in the practice and inviting everyone to our Patient Appreciation Party.

This year, because of COVID for the first time in 20 years we will not have a Patient Appreciation Party.

Last year our party was in the middle of February and I think it was the last large social event on the Treasure Coast before the restrictions for COVID took hold. I always enjoyed seeing the patients outside of the office and I know many people enjoyed seeing the demonstrations of the K-9 unit of our local police departments.

In lieu of the party we at Treasure Coast Dermatology are making a donation to the local police departments in appreciation of the work they have been and are doing for us.

My family is doing well. Our kids are back in school with masks and seem to be enjoying it. CC my daughter is getting better and better at math and wants to be a doctor like her dad. Just the thought of that brings a smile to my face.

George our son is 7 ½ years old and is autistic. George was nonverbal for quite a bit of time but is saying more words and though he is not conversing with us we are hopeful for the future. Our son, despite this difficulty with his speech, is one of the happiest children that I know.

I attribute this happiness mostly to his mother.

My wife Cammy is the most patient and kind person I have ever met. We have been married for almost 15 years now and I still think she is the most beautiful thing in the world.

It has been a difficult year in many ways, but we are very fortunate that our family has stayed healthy and strong together.

As for me many of you know I have a potentially serious heart condition. Because many people ask, I just want to let everyone know, my condition seems to be stable.

I have a very rare genetic heart disease. It's so rare that none of my local doctors had ever had a patient with it. My doctors' expectations, at this point, were that I would have had a transplant already. That hasn't happened yet, and I feel fine. I am happy and grateful to be alive every day.

The practice has undergone some changes. It has been very difficult scheduling patients while trying to make allowances for COVID.

We have been trying to keep a limited number of people in the waiting room and having them fill out paperwork before their visit or in patient rooms.

This has obviously changed our flow considerably.

Almost all of my patients recognize this and are patient with it.

I have had a small number of patients come in who seem irritated and I would like to talk about one of those episodes.

Just yesterday I had a patient come in whose husband had been my patient for many years. He had recently passed and I spent about 20 minutes talking to his wife as she related to me the difficult time she has had since he passed. When I walked into my next patient's room, he was quite angry at the wait. He said, "My time is money and you're wasting my money by keeping me waiting here." He said, "I think you are a great doctor and a nice guy but I am not going to have you waste my money." He stated simply that he is not coming back.

I understand that many people may be easily frustrated these days with all that is going on but I think we need to look at the blessings that we have.

And I will tell you another story. Six or seven months ago I was in my Fort Pierce office, and I had a patient come in and say, "Hey, you know, you have the richest man in St. Lucie county waiting in your waiting room?"

I knew this particular patient and he has been my patient for more than 20 years and had done well in life but I did not know that he was "the richest man in St. Lucie County." I joked with him when he came in and mentioned what the other patient had said. He said, "Tim, I don't mind that you keep me waiting sometimes." He said, "I like that you treat me like everyone else, that's how I want to be treated."

In my office everyone is treated the same, rich, poor, "important" or "not important." *You are all important to me.* The only time I make allowances or move people to the front is when they are gravely ill.

Further, people want personalized medical care but they want a medical office to run like a factory with everyone seen at their appointment time. The biggest complaint I get is that sometimes patients are seen late.

I do not understand this. You can't have both. If you want a doctor who will sit and talk to you and spend time with you and treat you then this is the practice for you. Let's face it, half the time you go to most practices, you never even get to see the doctor. I'm not being critical of this type of practice, it is hard to be in the business of medicine these days.

But I see and interact with EACH and every patient that comes in each day.

If you don't see the doctor (That's me) for bandage/surgical/wound checks, ***you DON'T get a bill.***

Do you get frustrated when you call a doctor's office and hear "press 1 for this, press 2 for that...etc..."? Call my office during business hours and you will talk to a PERSON each and every time. Does this make my office less efficient? Absolutely.

But the same people, who complain about waiting for me, will sit on a phone for five minutes and listen to a prerecorded option menu, and even then have to leave a message. And then they will criticize how I run my practice.

If I sound defensive, I'm not. But too many people want it both ways. They complain to me because there is actually a person to complain to. They put up with the prerecorded robot, because they know it doesn't care what you say to it.

*Ask yourself which type of practice really is respectful of your time.*

This applies to all my patients, *and know this: If you need me I will be there.*

Many of my patients have also asked me about the recent Coronavirus vaccines.

At first I had some reservations about the new type of vaccine because there is no long term data on its efficacy and safety. With that being said and in light of the recent surge in cases and the new strain of the virus that seems to be more contagious, I now recommend getting this vaccine.

To the people who say that lock downs don't work, I urge you to look at Australia which just had fewer than a 1000 TOTAL deaths in 2020 after a six week lock down as of the writing of this letter. Appropriate early measures taken would have been expensive, but it would have made this much less disastrous. Please read that again, the entire country of Australia with a population of more than 25 million people, had less than 1000 deaths.

To those of you, who feel that the Coronavirus is not in fact potentially lethal, consider yourselves lucky that neither you nor people you know and love have had a severe case of it.

It's time to get a strong handle on the spread.

Some people do not appreciate how dangerous it can be. I have friends, patients, and colleagues become very sick and died from this virus. Nurses in my practice have lost relatives, and they listen to some patients say "COVID isn't real."

If you think it doesn't exist or is "not that dangerous" you are mistaken.

So what can we do? Get the vaccine, wear a mask, and isolate yourself appropriately. These are defensive measures, but there is another thing to realize.

This virus not only has affected people's health but also their livelihoods. This is causing great financial hardships over the past year.

Many affected were food and service people. Patients have told me that they are saving more money than ever by not going out to eat. If you are one of those people, I urge you to support your local restaurants and businesses; buy gift cards, order take-out/go pick it up/ or use any of the food delivery services...and **tip generously**.

**If you can, support your local food banks, they are out of food and overwhelmed.**

We are getting to the 7th inning of this crisis (I hope) but if all that is left of our community is a series of strip malls of bankrupted businesses/restaurants/neighbors, our victory will be hollow.

Many "chain stores" are owned by individuals, patronize them and the independent ones too.

There's one other thing. Teachers and schools are also struggling. Trying to educate "remotely" must be incredibly

frustrating. Teachers are trying their best to teach students trying their best. But "remote learning" is like trying to swim with a weight around you. Look up the nearest school in your neighborhood on your computer or phone, and send them a check. I don't know what they are going to use it for, but I'll leave that in the school administrations' hands.

Throwing money at a problem does not make it go away, but it CAN make it easier.

If you're one of the lucky ones and have gotten through this ok so far, spread your blessings.

Some people really need them.

We are here for you, let's be here for each other.

Warmest Regards,



**TIM IOANNIDES, MD**

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I had written this letter and sent it to my office manager in late December, but then the attack on the Capitol happened. Many of you might not know this, but when I was in high school, I was a page for a Congressman. There were times throughout the week when there was filing to be done at the end of the day, and I would always volunteer to do it. The Congressional office staff thought I had this incredible work ethic, to stay there late filing paperwork, but I was doing it for selfish reasons. In order to get back to my apartment, I was lucky enough to be able to walk through the Capitol building when it was closed because of my badge as a Congressional Page. I was practically alone. Can you imagine a 17 year old walking through the domed Capitol and its hallways? The security guards knew me. There were desks and chairs where some of the most famous men in our country's history spoke. The security guards would say "try it, sit there." But I never did. These halls were as close to sacred as anything outside my church I have ever seen, even to this day. I would no more sit in a chair than I would stand on the altar table at a church.

"What so proudly we hail".....a symbol of what democracy in America is desecrated by a mob.

People defecated and urinated on this building. People desecrated this sacred building in unimaginable ways.

This isn't a political statement, this is fact. This wasn't a revolution, it was a desecration.

If you are ok with these types of actions, *on either side*, don't come in my office and try to convince me, it's not the time or the place.

And whichever side you're on, I probably have many differences of opinion with you.

And that's ok, I don't expect us to be all alike.

But I do believe that whoever "incited" or provoked anyone involved in a violent riot, anyone who participated in those violent acts should be held responsible for their actions.

And that's not just related to the incident at the Capitol building.

Any rioter.

Someone who destroys property and hurts others, should be held accountable for their actions.

We have freedoms in this country, we have responsibilities also.

We are personally responsible for our own actions.

Thomas Jefferson wrote: "I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend."

I have family members on the far ends of both sides of the spectrum. I love and talk to all of them. That doesn't mean I don't get angry or frustrated with them or the political situation.

But read the top of this letter.

I have a serious potentially fatal heart condition. I'm not going to miss talking to the people I love or let my last words to them be in anger. I have had patients walk out because I have refused to agree with their political statements (really, it's true.)

And I'm ok with that.

If you're going to choose your doctor because he doesn't agree with you politically, that's your right.

But here's the telling story: I had a patient come in and tell me how lonely he was, he hadn't spoken to his son in months. He was a Trump supporter, his son lived in California and was obviously liberal. They had stopped speaking to each other because of their political differences.

I said to him "I wish my Dad was alive so I could talk to him about politics..."

My Dad died 17 years ago from a brain tumor, my mother eight years ago from pancreatic cancer.

He called his son, and they spoke, not about politics, not about economics, but about the little things in life, the important things. About grandchildren, and health, and memories of the past.

Our time together is limited, our love for each other is not. Our love for each other is unlimited.

Read that again, say it out loud.

Don't waste time or love.