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An aesthetic experience

Dr. Karen Dover makes medicine an art form



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Dr. Karen Dover describes
the fine balance between
raising a family, practising
medicine and living
artistically.



An aesthetic experience

Dr. Karen Dover shows how she makes medicine—and living—an art form

KAREN DOVER is not your typical physician, so it makes sense that her Ottawa office is not your typical medical environment. This is a place where people can relax, de-stress and get comfortable. And, if after their appointment they come out looking like new and improved versions of themselves, all the better.

After 15 years in cardiac surgery, Dr. Dover decided to transition into laser and cosmetic medicine and surgery, a career shift she has not regretted. We asked Dr. Dover how she balances a busy practice with the personal demands of her four young children.

When did you know that you were going to enter the world of medicine?

When I was a young girl, I was teasingly referred to as “the plastic surgeon,” as I had a very precise way with my hands, right down to the methodical manner in which I buttered my toast. And I was forever doing derm checks and mini procedures on the family pets. I was creative and innovative by nature, but also enjoyed academia, so it was a natural fit. My father, Dr. Mark Dover, was an accomplished general surgeon, and my brother, Dr. Jeffrey Dover, is now an internationally renowned dermatologist, so it’s likely something I was destined to do.

You were in cardiac surgery for years before making the leap to cosmetic medicine. Isn’t that a huge shift in your world?

Not as much as one might think! The philosophy is unchanged: this dogged pursuit of excellence and the quest for knowledge and novel approaches prevails. They both offer a wonderful blend of the art and science of medicine.

How did this transition occur, was it a sudden change?

The choice to change lanes was a difficult but natural one for me. I wished to create a healthy and enriching environment, one which was conducive to challenging, creative and innovative work. I had been interested in the work being done in laser medicine and surgery and this seemed to be a way to achieve both. Essentially, my involvement in medicine has evolved with me as a person. I don't envision a career in any medical field as having a set path, but rather it should continue to evolve, responding to the needs of the practitioner, as he or she matures.

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So what do you think it was in you that had changed?

I needed to explore new venues and opportunities, but mostly I needed to "create." I'm very improvisational, so a career in cosmetic medicine, with a more artistic focus, allowed me to be more "me," and it continues to allow me to flourish as a creative person.

It's obvious that you are a talented artist. Are all of the paintings in your practice your own?

Yes. I have strived to create an environment in my practice in which my patients feel enriched yet calm, rather than stressed by a formal, clinical setting. I have always had a passion for the arts. I have a real love of art and music, but I find the greatest joy is in the actual creative process itself.

How do you create the peaceful setting in your office?

I've been told it's "an experience" to come for a visit. A tisane or a cappuccino is always at the ready, along with a tasty biscuit or truffle. Fresh flowers and enchanting literature enhance the space, as do extremely comfortable leather chairs. I pride myself on running close to schedule and minimizing waits, although I do make sure to give patients all the time they require. I ensure people feel comfortable calling to speak with me at any time if they have questions or concerns. In short, I treat my patients in a manner I would like to be treated myself, with the respect that they are due.



Who else works in your practice?

I practice independently, performing all the consultations and treatments myself. An excellent administrative assistant complements the scene.

You have four children under the age of 13. How do you manage running a practice and raising a family at the same time?

My family is my true passion, over everything else, which I could never balance without my partner, French Chef Jean-Claude Terretaz. We have a very busy household, but one that I wouldn't trade for anything. We live in the country, in a 150-year-old renovated stone house reminiscent of a Tuscan or Provençal home on a

hundred acres of land, with gorgeous views everywhere. It's an extraordinary haven in which to receive family and friends, a place where I can enjoy the simple pleasure of watching our children and our dogs running and playing freely in the countryside. It's this rich oasis that grounds, inspires and entertains me, especially after a long day at the office.

As if on cue, Dr. Dover's phone rings and she excuses herself to take a call. Seamlessly slipping into a soft French accent, it is obvious she is speaking with Jean-Claude.

You're bilingual?

Yes. We are raising our family in a bi-cultural manner. Jean-Claude speaks exclusively in his native European French while I tend to blend the two languages. We feel it is very important for our children to be exposed to all aspects of their cultural heritage.

You seem to have quite a laid-back, peaceful lifestyle at home.

Jean-Claude and I are very blessed and happy with our family. He's a perfect partner, and it doesn't hurt that he is a fantastic chef as well! It's been said that a great place to be is near him when he's hungry, because you are almost certain to be treated to a fabulous meal. One must time the visits carefully! Jean-Claude and I have been together for 17 years, and I feel like I just met him. What's great is that he still makes me laugh!

Do you think your children will go into medicine?

I don't know what they will grow into in their adult lives. Certainly I have seen some indications of artistic ability, but only time will tell. I do hope that they will learn from both Jean-Claude and me in terms of living a life that you love. We are creating a legacy of how to live, and if we're living it poorly then what are we teaching our children?

For further information on Dr. Dover's practice, please visit www.kjd-md.com ▲