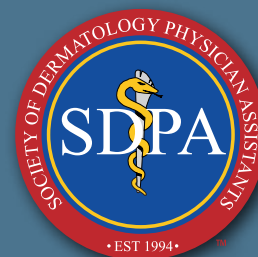


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Journal of Dermatology for Physician Assistants



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FROM THE PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Lupus Can Be Life Changing

By Jordyn Broas

My name is Jordyn; I'm on the right pictured here with my cousin Natalie. I am often told that I don't look sick and that makes it hard for people to understand what I'm dealing with. I may look like your typical college student, but I have been affected by an 'invisible disease.'

One week before I started my freshman semester at Daemen College in Amherst, New York, I was diagnosed with lupus and fibromyalgia. At first I had no idea what my doctor was talking about. But soon



The Lupus Alliance of Upstate New York is committed to serving lupus patients and their loved ones. We understand the isolation and fear patients often feel when they are first diagnosed with lupus. We also recognize the impact the disease can have on family members and friends. The Lupus Alliance of Upstate New York is dedicated to improving the quality of life for patients with lupus and their loved ones. We accomplish this by:

- Educating and informing patients with lupus, their families, the medical community, and the general public by promoting awareness and understanding of lupus.
- Supporting patients with lupus and their families by providing moral support, encouragement, and service to those whose lives have been affected by lupus.
- Promoting and supporting research for better treatment and an eventual cure for this disabling disease.

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Facebook: Lupus Alliance of Upstate



enough, I knew everything about lupus. All that I cared about was playing basketball for such a great college.

I thought I could be a normal college student and athlete - enjoying myself, staying up late, and doing everything that my friends were doing. I managed to finish my freshman year and made the all-freshman team for the American Mideast Conference. This accomplishment allowed me to feel as though I didn't have lupus, which was a great feeling. But practices and games were becoming harder as I continued to suffer from joint pain and fatigue. It was difficult watching my ability to perform at a high level diminish. Due to the frustration from the slip in my ability, I started working out and pushing myself but ignored my body telling me when I needed to take a break.

On Thanksgiving day, my second year of college, I was hospitalized with a blood clot. It was discovered that I was prone to blood clots and I would need to take a blood thinner for the rest of my life. My basketball career was over and I was devastated. I then spent Christmas night in the emergency room and soon after I was diagnosed with pericarditis, inflammation of the lining of the heart. Throughout all of this I was

trying to manage my academics, basketball, family, friends, significant other, and most importantly my health. My grades suffered, basketball was gone, I became depressed, and although I wasn't, I felt alone.

Lupus also affected my overall physical appearance. I lost a lot of my hair, I had the infamous butterfly rash on my face, and my weight fluctuated. Internally I faced nausea, inflammation, fatigue, foginess, headaches, a change in appetite, mood swings, and other wonderful symptoms.

"I also needed support from people who I could relate to - people who have gone through the same things or even worse."

I was forced to tell my coach that I could no longer play basketball. It was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, and I will never forget that day for the rest of my life. My teammates were great, and all of them showed up in support of the Annual Lupus Walk this September.

Soon after the Lupus Walk I had to have a kidney biopsy and was diagnosed with lupus nephritis. I am now on high dosages of medication and doctor visits are a weekly event. Despite having gone through a biopsy, dozens of doctor visits, countless tests, surprises, and disappointments, I always try to have a smile on my face.

Honestly I don't think I would be at this point in my life without my biggest support team: my loving mother, father, and sister. However, I also needed support from people who I could relate to - people who have gone through the same things or even worse. I have been going to the Lupus Alliance of Upstate New York for talks and volunteering and have been blessed to meet so many caring people who can guide me to a happier and healthier life. The Lupus Alliance of Upstate New York has gotten me and others through tough times, and I am grateful for such a wonderful organization so close to home. I'm determined not to let lupus destroy my future hopes and dreams. 🍷

Take Home Points for Derm PAs:

By Steven K. Shama, MD,
MPH, FAAD

1. This was a beautifully written, concise, and powerful perspective about a young woman, in the prime of her life, who needed to come to the realization that the hopes and dreams of the typical teenager would not be her reality. Jordyn's story resonated so deeply with me and I believe her story is one to which all of us can connect. Each of us has a dream, no matter how young or old, that we hope will be realized.

How do we come to the harsh conclusion that we need to dramatically modify that dream? Jordyn had the answer. We need to look to our patients for their answer. They are our teachers as well as we are theirs.

2. While I'm sure Jordyn's clinicians were helpful to her for psychological support, she credits her family for being there for her and also mentions that she needed to connect with people with whom she could relate...people who had gone through the "same thing or even worse." She credits the Lupus Alliance of Upstate New York for getting her through rough times and for connecting her with people who have guided her to a happier and healthier life.

I have written this thought in my other reflections in the Patient's Perspective section, and I write it again...we as clinicians must recognize the tremendous value support groups add to the wellbeing of our patients. We must form support groups when none exist, and refer our patients to them when we sense that our patients are in need of the experiences of other seasoned, caring patients.

Dermatology Physician Assistants



Physician Assistants (PAs) in dermatology play a number of varied and vital roles.

PAs are medical providers licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. From patient care and education, to skin surgery, treatment of chronic skin conditions, and cosmetic procedures, PAs are dynamic members of the healthcare team. PAs practice in every medical and surgical specialty and have been collaborating with dermatologists for 30 years, providing a wide variety of services. These include diagnosing, prescribing medications, ordering and interpreting lab tests, wound suturing, and medical or surgical treatment of a wide variety of clinical diseases. As with all PAs, dermatology PAs are legally and ethically bound to practice only under physician supervision.

PAs are trained in intensive, accredited education programs.

Because of the close working relationship that PAs have with physicians, PAs are educated in the medical model designed to mirror and complement physician training. PAs take a national certification examination and to maintain their certification, they must complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years and take a recertification exam every six years. Graduation from an accredited PA program and passage of the national certifying exam are required for state licensure.

How a PA practices dermatology varies with training, experience, and state law. In addition, the scope of the PA's responsibilities corresponds to the supervising physician's scope of practice. In general, a PA will see many of the same types of patients as the physician. Referral to the physician, or close consultation between the PA and physician, is based on the dynamic relationship between the physician and PA.

The Society of Dermatology Physician Assistants (SDPA) is a non-profit professional organization, composed of members who provide dermatologic care or have an interest in the medical specialty of dermatology. Fellow members provide medical services under the supervision of a board certified dermatologist.

More information can be found at www.dermpa.org and www.aapa.org.

