



**“If you have the right focus,
the right energy and the right
attitude, you will succeed”**

Surgeon and aesthetic practitioner Miss Sherina Balaratnam shares her journey in aesthetics

“Medicine is in my blood,” says Miss Sherina Balaratnam, a surgeon with plastic and reconstructive experience, who now runs the award-winning S-Thetics clinic in Buckinghamshire. “Back home in Malaysia my father is a neurologist and my mum is a former nurse, so I grew up in a clinical environment,” she explains, noting, “It was great to see patients coming back to my father’s clinic and getting better each time – I felt he was really making a difference and it was special that my family was a part of that.”

During her time at the University of Leicester Medical School, from which she graduated in 1998, Miss Balaratnam says she had fantastic teachers and mentors that inspired her to pursue a Master’s degree in surgical science at University College London. Her interest in skin and aesthetic treatment evolved from there, which was further encouraged when Miss Balaratnam undertook a Master’s in 2004 focusing on photo-dynamic therapy (PDT), examining the influence light technology has on the skin. She says, “At the time I didn’t know much about PDT so it took me into the world of non-surgical treatments.”

As a result, Miss Balaratnam attended more conferences on lasers, radiofrequency and other energy-based devices. “My interest in non-surgical treatments was sparked so I also undertook training in cosmetic injectables, which then led to me doing some part-time work in a private clinic,” she explains.

After making the difficult decision to leave her NHS surgical career in 2010 to pursue a career in aesthetic medicine, Miss Balaratnam says, “I am privileged to have covered clinics in and out of London for several years before moving to Buckinghamshire to live and launch my own clinic, S-Thetics, in Beaconsfield.” She continues, “I wanted to combine my knowledge and experience during my plastic surgical training in the NHS, together with the latest scientific evolutions in non-surgical medicine and bridge that gap. S-Thetics is almost four years old now and I feel I have done just that. I am so lucky to do what I do.”

The biggest challenge in setting up S-Thetics was starting from scratch, she says, explaining, she moved to a town where she didn’t know anyone, had to recruit a team, as well as establish a treatment offering and build a patient database. “I have three pieces of advice for new practitioners considering opening a clinic; the first is ‘just do it’. Do it because you want to and believe that you can. If you have the right focus, the right energy and the right attitude, you will succeed.” She continues, “The next thing I’d say is don’t purchase everything at once; be selective about what you bring into the clinic, whether its topical skincare, energy-based devices or injectables. You should also be selective in the partners you choose to work with – it’s all about chemistry, not just with you and your internal team, but external partners you work with as well. Before you settle in, listen to your patients and find out what they need – then do your research and investigate all the options available. Attend conferences like the Aesthetics Conference and Exhibition; there’s a lot of knowledge in the community that you can learn from.” Finally, she emphasises,

“Remember who this if for – patients should always come first.”

In regards to purchasing devices, Miss Balaratnam explains how she has recently introduced body-contouring procedures to her clinic with SculpSure, a light-based technology which aims to reduce fat cells, and Emsculpt, which focuses on building muscle and reducing fat. She says, “Energy-based devices have hugely evolved over the last 10 years. Where they may have been more uncomfortable or delivered less predictable results in the past, we now have more refined and powerful technologies that can effectively target all layers, such as the skin, fat and muscle, without any downtime.”

One of the key things Miss Balaratnam has learnt so far in her aesthetic career is how influential patient consultations are. She says, “When I consider the majority of my female patients, most say how tired they look and feel, while also being stressed with their day-to-day lifestyle.” As a result, Miss Balaratnam ensures she addresses these concerns and adopts holistic techniques to improve how patients’ feel, in addition to the physical results achievable through treatment.

To conclude, Miss Balaratnam praises the support her staff members provide. Both in 2016 and 2018 S-Thetics took home the Aesthetics Awards for Best Clinic Reception Team; something which Miss Balaratnam is extremely proud of. “I have an incredible team who all work very hard. One of my key messages to new staff members is that patients always come first. My team have listened to that and carry it out in their work wholeheartedly,” she says.

When it comes to selecting the right team members, Miss Balaratnam advises that while you should ensure you hire someone with the right skillset, someone with the right mindset and attitude should come first. “Everything else in life can be learned,” she explains, “If you’ve got someone who’s positive, determined, wants to learn and be part of a community, then you should make them part of your professional family.”

What do you think can be improved in aesthetics?

We should be educating patients with knowledge of treatment options and suitable practitioners to empower them to make safe decisions. We’ve run patient education events at S-Thetics since we opened, which have been very successful.

How do you see aesthetics evolving in the next 10 years?

I do believe that our diagnostic tools are going to evolve, with greater visualisation of assessment to identify skin concerns and treat accordingly – taking devices such as VISIA skin imaging system and rolling them forward. In addition, I can see regenerative treatments evolving; perhaps to enhance skeletal growth and elevate muscles.

Reflecting on your career, what advice would you give your 25-year-old self?

Be kind to yourself. I say that to all my patients now.