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Life after
Dr. Brandt:
In search of the
social set's
next face guru

with
David Bailey and
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LIFE AFTER DR. BRANDT

WRITTEN BY LYNN SCHNURNBERGER

LOSING A DOCTOR IS NEVER EASY. WHEN IT'S A DERMATOLOGIST BELOVED BY THE A-LIST WORLDWIDE, IT'S A "NOW WHAT?" CATASTROPHE



Text messages were flying last spring between a half dozen or so friends in the beauty industry—hairdressers, stylists, those in-the-know about how New York City's celebrities and socialites maintain their appearance—when Madonna was spotted slipping into the entrance of 1049 Fifth Avenue. Was she scooping up a new residence in the posh condominium building? Possibly. But more likely? After the

death of her beloved dermatologist, Dr. Fredric Brandt, weeks earlier, she was searching for a new doctor to wield the injectables that keep her looking age-indeterminate. And dermatologist Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank just happens to have offices at 1049 Fifth. It looked like the Queen of Pop was anointing a new clinician.

When asked to verify the rumor of taking on Madonna as a client, Dr. Frank demurred, explaining that he was inhibited by state privacy laws and that, of course, he could not confirm or deny that the iconic singer was a patient. He did offer this: "Either way, the truth always comes out in the end."

The truth of where the many prominent clients of Dr. Brandt are taking their business is not easily obtained, however. It was a key question that circulated among mourners at his April memorial, hosted by socialite Lisa Marie Falcone, wife of hedge fund manager Philip Falcone

and held in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. Some of the guests were too embarrassed to speak above a murmur. But in the weeks that followed his death, patients asked one another in voices growing steadily louder and more urgent: Whose hands should we trust our faces to?

There were the obvious choices: Dr. David Colbert (who has compared the skin to an expensive fabric "that should be maintained like your finest cashmere sweater"), Drs. Patricia Wexler, Ellen Gendler, Melanie Grossman, Doris Day, Roy Geronemus, Lisa Airan, Joel Kassimir, Dennis Gross—there is no dearth of contenders. (And I'm sure I'll hear even more names from readers disgruntled over the omission of their favorite, so let me here offer a pre-apology.)

"One person called me with a list of eight names, asking me which doctor I thought she should go to," says beauty doyenne and *Allure* contributing editor at large Joan Kron, who declines making recommendations because she doesn't think it's an appropriate role for journalists.

Not every doctor is simply sitting back and waiting for Dr. Brandt's patients to come to them. Melinda Farina, the president and founder of the patient-referral service Integrated Aesthetics Consulting, says that she's noticed a number of MDs trying to capitalize on Dr. Brandt's demise by co-opting his trademark techniques: "They're putting all of their money into optimizing their online Google searches and investing in key words like 'Liquid face-lift' or 'Y face-lift,' all of the procedures he was best known for."

Superstar colorist Sharon Dorram has bestowed beautifully natural color reminiscent of children's hair on Barbra Streisand, Sarah Jessica Parker and Kate Hudson,

to name a few—as well as some of the top fashion and beauty professionals in the city. In the elegant Upper East Side salon she shares with business partner and hairdressing icon Sally Hershberger, Dorram has been privy to some disturbing jockeying.

“Some of the dermatologists who sit in my chair have been mercenary in asking me to recommend them to clients—so offensive, so soon after Fred’s death,” says Dorram, a close friend of Dr. Brandt’s who was still reeling over his passing when we talked. “And I didn’t see it myself, but one of my clients said that a certain dermatologist was actually giving out cards at Dr. Brandt’s memorial.”

Another shady development: doctors who claim to be flooded with desperate A-list clients ... but aren’t. After all, who’s going to fact-check it? One lesser known dermatologist I spoke to alleged that he was seeing “dozens of Dr. Brandt’s patients,” a dubious claim that sounded like an attempt to push his name into the ranks of A-listers.

T

he sad circumstances of Dr. Brandt’s death make such maneuvers particularly questionable. “Why, Fred, why?” comedian and talk-show personality Juy Behar asked plaintively at Dr. Brandt’s invitation-only memorial. More than 400 wrinkle-free boldfaced names, from TV star Kelly Ripa to actress Blythe Danner to fashion icons Carolina Herrera and Calvin Klein, packed the auditorium. As we sat facing the stage, usually home to the

Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, we agreed that Fred would have adored the 3,000 white orchids filling it now. A beauty editor sitting next to me whispered, “If only Dr. B. could have seen the love here today, do you think he would have done it?”

All of us who knew and admired him were stunned by the news that the pioneering doctor who used Botox as far back as the early ’90s—when it sounded absolutely insane



Dr. Brandt became a best friend, almost a family member, to his patients, even the famous ones, like Kelly Ripa.

that’s hard to manage in any field. He specialized in the “Y” lift, injecting filler beneath the cheekbone to add volume to the face, helping patients avoid surgery. In a youth-obsessed society, some patients came to see him in their twenties, and others checked in once a month, although he never let anyone go overboard.

One day, as I was trailing him for a story I was working on, he introduced me to the mother of a famous movie producer who had been to the office only weeks earlier. “You don’t need anything, darling, you look beautiful!” he said, sending her off feeling gorgeous without the aid of a needle. He was a dandy who bought designer clothes from Lanvin and Givenchy off the runway, an avid art collector of pieces by the likes of Damien Hirst and Richard Prince, a health nut who gave up sugar and then periodically snuck a cookie. Hundreds of clients considered him an intimate. After spending half an hour dishing with Dr. B. about his latest Prada purchase or any show in HGTV’s lineup (Fred loved decorating his Coconut Grove home and his 25th-floor apartment overlooking New York’s trendy High Line), it was impossible to leave the office and not feel like you were his bestie.

Carl Sheusi, Dr. Brandt’s yoga instructor for over 10 years, saw him the day before he died. “I knew he was depressed,” Sheusi says, as did others closest to him. In the week before his death, Dr. B. canceled appointments, something he never did. Dr. Joel Kassimir, who saw one of Dr. Brandt’s former patients not long after his death, says she told him that “the last time I saw Dr. B. he wasn’t singing.” A sure sign that something was terribly wrong.

Then there is the *Kimmy Schmidt* theory. While his friend and publicist, Jacquie Tractenberg, downplayed the idea that Martin Short’s parody of him

on the Tina Fey Netflix series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* had anything to do with Dr. Brandt’s suicide, others close to Dr. B. believe the caricature pushed him over the edge.

Now everyone is forced to move on. Dr. Frank seems to be one of the leading successors to Dr. Brandt. When pressed, he said he was getting “about five calls a day” from Dr. Brandt’s former patients, who he’s squeezing into an already busy practice. “While it’s nice to be

“ONE PERSON CALLED ME WITH A LIST OF EIGHT NAMES, ASKING ME WHICH DOCTOR I THOUGHT SHE SHOULD GO TO NOW.” —JOAN KRON

to inject botulinum toxin into your forehead—our friend, our confidant, the doctor who made up rap songs and sang show tunes during our appointments and who made the business of serums and syringes positively fun, had taken his own life. Gwyneth Paltrow and supermodel Stephanie Seymour were clients, and with offices in New York and Miami, Fred Brandt was considered by many to be one of the country’s premier dermatologists for 20 years—a feat

seeing all of these new people, it's tough that they're here because Fred's gone," he said, a sentiment echoed by many colleagues.

Other clients are taking comfort in continuing to see Dr. Brandt's protégé, the gentle and talented Dr. Robert Anolik, who worked with Dr. B. for over five years. "Dr. A." and "Dr. B." were more than colleagues and disciple-teacher; they were good friends who talked about life and work on walks home and during Sundays in the park with Dr. Anolik's family. Self-deprecatingly, Dr. A. told me he was "Dr. B.'s Ed McMahon," invoking talk-show host Johnny Carson's legendary sidekick. Longtime Dr. Brandt fan Kelly Ripa gave me a more appropriate analogy. "Dr. Anolik's the young Jedi, the Luke Skywalker," she said, in a phone interview. "Dr. Brandt would literally put his hand on top of Dr. A's to teach him all of his techniques. The first time I saw Dr. Brandt was to get Botox under my arms to stop sweating," Ripa remembers. "For the injections to work you have to be sweating when you get them, but Dr. B. made me so comfortable, I was laughing so much, that I couldn't sweat. I feel that same level of comfort with Dr. Anolik. Going to see him feels like going to see family."

It's strange to go to the old offices and see the waiting rooms stripped of Dr. Brandt's paintings. Gone too are shelves filled with the stylish black and white boxes containing Dr. Brandt's acclaimed skin-care line—if you want some of his cleverly titled Needles No More or D.N.A. ("Do Not Age") serums, you'll have to buy them online or at Sephora.

There's an intimacy and a rapport you have with someone you're entrusting your face to that you don't necessarily need with a doctor who's giving you a flu shot. In my case,

I talked to my friends, received some names and, with some trepidation, went to see Dr. Dendy Engelman, Sofia Vergara's dermatologist. It turns out "Dr. Dendy" has a light hand, a good eye and a lovely manner—and she's a hngger. I'm planning to see her again.

"In other areas of medicine doctors are taught to keep their distance, but in dermatology we're dealing with a person's psyche, their self-esteem," says noted skin savant Dr. Patricia Wexler. "Patients and doctors exchange confidences—you become like a best friend or family. Especially a doctor like Fred Brandt, who went to parties with clients. He went to synagogue with their parents."

Dr. Wexler, for one, doesn't want to see Dr. Brandt's devotees, at least not right away. "The first person a patient goes to see after Fred will be their Deborah Norville," she says, referring to Jane Pauley's unpopular replacement on *Today*. "They'll still be grieving and on the rebound."

"A lot of doctors are very good—there's no one who's 'the best,'" says Kron. "After a reasonable amount of time, everyone will find a new doctor. And they'll do a good job. But the experience of getting injections is never going to be the same as it was, as feeling you were loved by Fred." ■

THE CONTENDERS

What happens when the irreplaceable must be replaced? Patients are finding their way to these five respected docs



HEIR APPARENT

Dr. Robert Anolik has a reputation for being a wizard with a laser. What insiders know is that Dr. Brandt trained "Dr. A." to perform the signature Y lift and other procedures that made Dr. Brandt famous. With hands that learned directly from Brandt, Dr. Anolik seems poised to carry on the doctor's legacy.

OLD GUARD/NEW TECHNIQUES

Part skin maven and part Jewish mother, **Dr. Patricia Wexler** was a pioneer in performing liposuctions way back in 1986 and has maintained her cutting-edge rep these days with a minimum use of scalpels. Dr. Pat is one of those MDs patients call for everything—she's everybody's best girlfriend.



POP-STAR ANNOINTED?

With or without Madonna, **Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank** has a star-studded clientele that is about 40 percent male. With his chiseled good looks, Frank is a walking advertisement for his treatments, including the trademarked UT, or UltraTight procedure, which gets rid of those pockets of fat underneath the chin.



RISING STAR

Wait time for a first appointment with **Dr. Dendy Engelman** can be two or three months. That's because this Southerner brings an appealingly moderate approach to injectables. "I'd rather do a little and have you come back in two weeks," she told me. (Except I didn't need that second visit.)



ONE OF THE ORIGINALS

With offices in New York City's Flatiron district, **Dr. David Colbert** counts Naomi Watts and Michelle Williams as clients. Colbert was an early adopter of Ultherapy (the ultrasound, non-surgical procedure that lifts facial muscles and tightens the neck), claiming it's more popular than Botox with his patients.

