

Drs. Harlan and Todd Pollock appear to be a typical father-son combo. Their admiration, respect and love for each other is obvious. They enjoy witty banter and play off each other's sentences.

DCMS Physician Spotlight

Father and Son, MD

by Lauren Cowling, director of communications

But this pair of plastic surgeons shares more than a last name and a medical practice — they developed a procedure called PTS, short for progressive tension sutures. The Pollocks say that the procedure virtually has eliminated the most common abdominoplasty complication — seroma formation — while decreasing recovery time. The development of PTS had its genesis when, while watching one of his father's surgeries, Todd asked questions and made comments while his father was operating. That led to the two coming up with the procedure that they now teach other physicians and which is practiced worldwide. They credit their backgrounds in general surgery for their desire to devise the best way to take care of their patients before, during and after surgery.

Todd says he knew from the age of 5 or 6 that medicine was for him.

"I grew up around medicine and knew from very early on it was for me," he says. "I used to read my dad's medical books and was very intrigued."

He often talked to his father about medicine and occasionally watched him perform surgeries. Upon entering medical school, Todd was fairly certain he would go into emergency medicine, and then toyed with the idea of obstetrics and general surgery. He then realized that plastic surgery was the way to go.

"I never pushed Todd into medicine, but I was delighted that he was interested," Harlan says.

Harlan, however, decided later in life to make medicine his career. He credits his older brother, who was a physician, with steering him to medicine. He chose plastic surgery because it combines his love of arts and creativity with science.

Both physicians say they love plastic surgery because no two cases are the same, and they constantly can improve their technique and innovate to improve outcomes for patients. When Harlan compares surgical techniques to golf techniques, Todd quickly adds, "No; surgery is less frustrating."

Father and son began working together in 1997, and both say that practicing together has been a good fit.



Drs. Todd and Harlan Pollock

Harlan says going to work (or missing work) is easy because of his trust in Todd. He says he can't put a value on the personal and professional relationship he has with his son, and that he's most proud of Todd's ethics and great integrity — not new surgical techniques or high-profile surgeries.

Todd agrees that being able to practice with his father is priceless and that once they got past "the teen-age music years" of his life, their personal and working relationships have been smooth.

The two collaborate on patient cases as often as possible, even if it's not the most economical for their practice. "It gets harder and harder to do cases together, but there is such a uniqueness and a value to it that we do it as much as time allows," Harlan says. "Plus, it's a lot more fun."

Harlan, 73, who has been in private practice since 1971, isn't sure when he will retire and Todd, 50, knows replacing him isn't an option.

Outside the office, the Drs. Pollock spend time together with their families. Todd's two sisters also live in Dallas and Harlan enjoys time with his six grandchildren. Todd has been married to his wife, Kasi, for 17 years and they have one daughter. Harlan has been married to Hannah for 51 years. Aside from their medical practice, the Pollocks serve on various boards and associations in the medical community and the Dallas community.

Separately the Pollocks love to travel and to be outdoors. Todd is working on perfecting a barbecue recipe which Harlan boasts is "really good BBQ." That's high praise from a father.

Although Todd didn't learn about BBQ from his dad, Todd still credits much of his professional and personal success to his father.

"He's taught me to treat everyone like you would want to be treated — with respect and caring," Todd says. "He taught me how important it is to maintain an honorable reputation — in medicine and in life — because in the end that is all you're left with." That's high praise from a son. **DMJ**