

FAMILY MAN, BUSINESS MAN, PLASTIC SURGEON

Matt Concannon, MD

*Dr. Concannon shares real
life obstacles in business and
in the medical industry.*

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IT ALL BEGAN WITH a World Book Encyclopedia. When Matt Concannon, MD, was in the 5th grade, he and a fellow student were looking at the glossy anatomy images that came to life on the pages of the book. “One guy in glass said ‘I’m going to be a doctor, so I need to look at this’ and I said, ‘well I’m going to be a doctor too,’” Concannon reminisced about the first time he remembers thinking about the medical profession.

There are three key moments Concannon remembers in his wanting to be a physician. The second came as a 12-year-old caddy on the golf course his family lived on. “I would caddy, which is the hardest work I’ve ever done!” said Concannon “You’re lugging this 100 pound bag for this guy and you have to be a billy goat for \$5.” Concannon said that every day he would walk by the tennis courts and see all the doctors playing. That’s when he started playing tennis and also thought, ‘I want to be a doctor.’

The last moment for Concannon came when he was in 8th grade. Concannon stumbled across a couple of medically related books, but the one most notable to him was called *Intern*, by Dr. X. This book was a diary kept by a first year physician giving a week by week account of what his internship year was really like. Dr. X dictated and his wife transcribed it. “It was true of the old-time rotating internship and I read it and just ate it up,” said Concannon. “I was like ‘This is it – this is what I want to do! *Intern* really struck a nerve.”

There is a second part to this story – about 5 years ago, Concannon was thinking about this book and purchased it. The book was written in 1965, “and the profound thing throughout the whole book (reading it in 2010) was that these guys could do NOTHING to help their patients,” said Concannon. A physician gave a patient too much morphine and had to bag him all night because ventilators weren’t invented yet, Concannon

recalled. “The thing that was the most striking to me was that, in my lifetime, medicine has gone from that to now doing chain therapy and face transplants – just in the course of 60 years,” said Concannon. “It’s tremendous what has happened in medicine.”

Concannon grew up in St. Louis and met his wife, Kathy, the first day of classes at St. Louis University. The two dated all through college and got married the summer before Concannon started medical school at the University of Missouri. “I ultimately went to Mizzou and that was a great choice for me for a couple of different reasons,” said Concannon. In the mid-1980s loan interest rates were over 20 percent and Concannon gave consideration to cost of school as well as reputation. “I was able to do prestigious things at Mizzou. Every medical school is different and Mizzou had a very strong plastics department,” said Concannon.

When Concannon was a third year medical student, he came very close to



being a neurosurgeon, and he said he can't even imagine how different his life would have been. He remembers going to the library and looking at the journal articles in Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery. "On any given day, I could operate on someone's hand, someone else's leg, someone's face – we're all over the body," said Concannon. "Plastic surgeons use their imaginations more than probably any other specialty." Concannon was particularly inspired by the editor of this journal because of his honesty in talking about the articles and the editor's belief that one should not just show the best two results of the study. "So this guy was my hero," said Concannon. For the past 7 years, Concannon has been section editor of this international journal that is one of the top 10 most cited medical journals in the world. "In my career that is probably one of the things I'm most proud of – being section editor," said Concannon. "And if I would have looked back and told my third year medical student self that I would be section editor, he wouldn't have believed it."

Concannon stayed at the University of Missouri for his residency in surgery and in plastic surgery, and also his fellowships in plastic surgery microvascular research. In 1994, Concannon, Kathy, and their growing family with 4 young children, moved to Boston, MA for a hand and microsurgery fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital. "I covered 'The Pit' for any hand, wound or facial trauma issue that came into the ER," said Concannon. "In medicine, it's good to go to different programs because each has a different way of doing things." The size of Massachusetts General is but one thing that set it apart from University of Missouri Hospital. "There were 66 operating rooms at Mass General," said Concannon. "For the first 6 months, I got lost trying to find the operating room my patient was in."


The Concannons stayed in Boston for a year and had their fifth child while there. At the time, Concannon hoped to go in to academic medicine at a teaching hospital, and he ended up at

the University of Louisville, Department of Surgery. It wasn't long before Concannon came back to University of Missouri Health Sciences Center in the division of Plastic Surgery because he craved the strong leadership of the program. Concannon was part of the University of Missouri Health Sciences Center in plastics for 12 years before deciding new policies of insurance companies and other requirements took away from the cases he most enjoyed. "I didn't go into academic medicine because I felt like I needed a boss," said Concannon. He didn't have as much freedom in his personal business generation, such as posting advertisements or getting specific equipment, as he would like. Concannon decided private practice might be a good option for him, and he decided that "if I'm going to set this up, it's going to be a lot of work – if I do it, I want it to be when I'm 45 and not 50," said Concannon. "And that was maybe the smartest thing I ever thought of."

Concannon opened Concannon Plastic Surgery in early 2007 and hasn't looked back. "My rule is you never want to be the first one or the last one to be doing something," said Concannon. He said that Kathy deserves all the credit for the non-invasive procedures they are currently receiving praise for. One difference in his practice is that "if we couldn't measure a result, we either retreated them or gave them their money back. I think that is a difference you won't see anywhere else," said Concannon. The care Concannon is able to provide to his patients is very rewarding to him. "First of all, I see cosmetic surgery as no different than someone who takes the time to work out every day," said Concannon. "Most people workout to look better – The things we do are not things you can fix by just working out." He adds that a lack of confidence can keep you from enjoying life. "I've had a great number of patients who are in tears because they are so happy – and that is beyond rewarding," said Concannon.



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As with any business, there have been obstacles to overcome. The changing insurance policies with Obamacare, however, are not affecting the group because they are not considered an in-network provider for anybody. Concannon did say he would most likely have to add one to two additional staff members to go through the additional paperwork with it and authorizations if they ever decided to contract to be providers within insurance networks. However, since individual physicians have essentially no say in reimbursement once they become ‘in-network’, it is unlikely that The Concannons will ever take this path. “Plastic surgery is kind of a unique niche,” said Concannon in terms of the cosmetic aspects they do. He added that it is important to always have procedures done by those who are board certified, by individuals trained in that particular area, it is of no benefit to confirm that your breast augmentation surgeon is ‘board certified’ only to discover later that they are board certified as a cardiothoracic surgeon, and have no real training in plastic surgery”. Concannon has been certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery since 1997.

An area that has caught Concannon’s eye for a possibility of expansion is that of Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy. “It’s not exactly plastic surgery, but it ties in well with our overall purpose: to look and feel better,” said Concannon. Basically it takes the hormone levels and uses other hormones that are identical to those made in the body. Tweaking one’s current levels can have numerous benefits for age-related hormone level declines and other reasons in both men and women.

Concannon Plastic Surgery is a family business and basically all of their children work there as well. “It’s the coolest thing ever,” said Concannon of working with his family. Kathy came in as office manager about 2 years after we opened the practice in 2007. Concannon said it was the arguably the biggest stressor in their marriage in 32 years. At first they butted heads and it took a long time to get into equilibrium. “But now, I cannot imagine it any other way,” said Concannon. “And Kathy has really grown the entire spa – we’ve learned a lot about running a business.” Concannon added that they have a great crew. “I feel so lucky – I don’t even feel like I have a job,” said Concannon. “It’s a huge gift.”

Dr. Concannon has over 25 years of experience in plastic surgery, research, and education. Since 2005, he has held the distinction of one of America’s Best Doctors. Concannon says that is one of the best and most meaningful awards he has received as it is voted on by other physicians.