

Finding the Fountain of Youth - Advances in Cosmetic Dermatology with Dr. Patrick Bitter Jr.

Written by Ionuț Raicea

In 1521, exactly 500 years ago, Juan Ponce de León, the famous Spanish explorer and conquistador, set foot on Southwest Florida with the clear goal to discover the Fountain of Youth. Five centuries later, another pioneer in the search for eternal youth, this time in cosmetic dermatology, bought a house close to where Ponce de León and his party first debarked on Floridian soil.

Coincidence or fate? Either way, it's an exciting story that Dr. Patrick Bitter Jr., a Stanford University School of Medicine alumnus and CEO at [Patrick Bitter, Jr., MD Advanced Aesthetic Dermatology](#), has to share.

"Ponce de León didn't find the Fountain of Youth, but I did!" Dr. Bitter said.

Although all of us enjoy a thrilling myth from time to time, Dr. Bitter Jr.'s words are as accurate of a statement as they can be. His contagious excitement and hopefulness helped paint a confident image of cosmetic dermatology, which now, in 2021, harnesses more advanced tools than ever in the fight against skin aging.

"This is a fantastic and very exciting time to be in cosmetic medicine and cosmetic dermatology, and it's a fantastic time for whoever is interested in keeping their skin healthy and slowing down the way their skin ages," he said.

All we have to do is seize the moment, and Dr. Bitter Jr. is delighted to guide us towards achieving our facial aesthetic goals!

Dr. Bitter Jr. enlightens us on IPL (*i.e.*, Intense Pulsed Light) and [BBL](#) (*i.e.*, BroadBand Light), the two cosmetic therapies improved and perfected by himself, and helps us understand the benefits of preventative cosmetic treatments.

Giving Hope to the Patient

Dr. Bitter Jr.'s search for lifelong healthy skin began at a fragile age, when he first glanced at his father's dermatology-related journals. Pictures of graphic skin diseases prompted the young Dr. Bitter Jr. to take matters into his own hands and pursue the best training available in dermatology.

After finishing his dermatology residency at Stanford, Dr. Bitter Jr. was finally ready to embark upon his quest to find the promised land of lifelong youthfulness.

His initial voyages into dermatology were primarily medical and surgical. During his medical school years at Stanford, he saw numerous skin issues in elderly patients who were World War I veterans, which gave Dr. Bitter Jr. a chance to choose a future path.

"Surgery didn't appeal to me because it was in the operating room, and you didn't talk to the patient. I wanted to talk to my patients," he said.

Even 40 years later, Dr. Bitter Jr. joyfully recalls his patients' century-old stories.

"I realized that every interaction I had with a patient in dermatology was either addressing something that was a fear that they had something bad, or a rash that made them really uncomfortable or they had something visible on their skin that they were embarrassed by," he said.

So Dr. Bitter Jr. made the patients' fears, doubts, and discomforts his primary object of care.

"My interaction with them (*i.e.*, the patients) was all about giving them hope," he said.

Fortunately, the discovery of superior technologies allowed Dr. Bitter Jr. to switch his area of interest from medical to cosmetic dermatology and approach cosmetic care his way.

"With the advent of new treatments and technologies in the last 20 to 30 years that have allowed us to do things for our patients we only could dream of before, it was a natural thing for me to really evolve into cosmetic dermatology. Today, my practice in Silicon Valley is 95% cosmetic dermatology," Dr. Bitter said.

Serendipity, Observation, Passion, and the Fotofacial Procedure

Five centuries after Ponce de León, Dr. Bitter Jr. is happy to claim lifelong, youthful skin for the field of cosmetic dermatology through his world-renowned Fotofacial procedure. This treatment employs intense light pulses to rejuvenate facial skin, stimulate new collagen production and inhibit natural aging signs. Dr. Bitter Jr.'s discovery relies upon his personalized use of IPL and BBL devices.

Now, at the age of 65, he sees his skin younger-looking than his 43-year-old self. "I think I've done 135 or 140 (*i.e.*, BBL treatments) on myself by now and kept evolving the techniques as the BBL technology has evolved. And now, 22 years later, my skin looks better than it did when I was 43... Way better," he said.

The Fotofacial procedure owes its development to three factors. As with most scientific and medical discoveries, Dr. Bitter Jr. gives credit to serendipity for discovering the right path to youthful skin.

"The serendipitous part was the office manager saying one day, years ago 'Why don't you learn how to use the IPL device? And then you could help pay for the lease payments on it,'" Dr. Bitter shared.

While his father mainly used the IPL device to treat skin spots, Dr. Bitter Jr. broke free of the standard approach and took IPL to the next level.

"I'm not a spot doctor. I'm a skin doctor. And so I started to just experiment by treating, not just spots, but treating the whole face," he said.

The second ingredient in Dr. Bitter Jr.'s discovery of the anti-aging power of light was keen observation. After having realized that he was onto something of great benefit to his patients Dr. Bitter Jr. put his idea to the test. The rest is history.

He has now done more than 40,000 treatments on thousands of patients and millions of pulses of light have been used for treatments. But Dr. Bitter Jr. could never have glanced at the shores of lifelong youthful skin without the trust of his patients.

"I really have tremendous gratitude for all of the patients that have trusted me to try things on them over the years because that's where I really learned how to do what I do," he said.

The third and final ingredient to Dr. Bitter Jr.'s phenomenal success is brilliant technology. Decades ago, when Dr. Bitter Jr. was making his first steps into cosmetic dermatology, "the original company that pioneered IPL was on the brink of bankruptcy and IPL was on the verge of being abandoned as a tool in medicine because it was not well received at all in dermatology and plastic surgery circles".

However, after Dr. Bitter pioneered the Fotofacial procedure using IPL to treat the whole face IPL began to be accepted as an essential technology in treating skin. Within five years of the introduction of Dr. Bitter's Fotofacial procedure Sciton introduced BBL, the most advanced IPL technology available allowing Dr. Bitter to develop even better techniques and protocols.

"With the brilliant engineers at Sciton continually improving their technology and passionate clinicians like myself exploring new ways to use this technology we have a beautiful example of the best of technology meeting clinical expertise. And it is just this coming together of industry and clinical practice that has made possible for everyone a lifetime of healthy youthful skin and today, with Sciton's new BBL Hero Technology, we now can truly create healthy youthful skin anywhere on the body. Something Ponce De Leon and I only dreamt of has now become a reality," he said.

He estimates that 20,000 people a day are treated with a BBL device across the globe. And there is one simple reason for this: people love the way these treatments make their skin look.

Passion, astute observation, technology and a drop of luck—"this perfect union or marriage" of factors led to many thousands of happy customers, whose skin looks, as Dr. Bitter Jr. puts it, "half their age." Such a game-changing discovery helped Dr. Bitter Jr. achieve his well-deserved fame in the world of aesthetic medicine.

"I discovered that light could fix things like red faces and sun-damaged skin, and that was the birth of the Fotofacial treatment. I realized that this was valuable, so I gave a name to the process that I came up with," he said.

However, with most great innovations comes great responsibility, and Dr. Bitter Jr. was ready to share his secret to the rejuvenative power of light with fellow cosmetic dermatologists.

He has trained almost 10,000 practitioners in using light-based technology. Now, these aesthetic practitioners bring the anti-aging benefits of light treatments to patients around the world.

"I May Be 65, but I Don't Want to Look 65"

Cosmetic dermatology made it possible for us to create a firm wall between the aging process and its effects on the face.

As Dr. Bitter Jr. helps us understand, "You don't have to look old as you get older. Looking old is not a given, and you can choose to age while looking great and feeling great."

In the end, it all boils down to our choices: we can accept the aging process and let it affect how we look or we can seek out a cosmetic specialist and do something about it.

"I may be 65, but I don't want to look 65. I know what 65-year-old men look like, and I don't want to look that way, and I don't want to feel that way. I live my life, and do Fotofacial treatments with BBL on myself because it's the choice I make to keep my skin healthy and looking young which makes me feel good," he said.

All of us now have access to the 21st-century 'Fountain of Youth' that Dr. Bitter Jr. has discovered and shared with the world. And the sooner we "drink" from it, the better. Dr. Bitter Jr. advises younger adults not to wait until they have aged but to undergo light treatments when already in their 20s or 30s, when their skin is healthy and still looks youthful.

"I published several pioneering papers on the discovery that if you did regular treatments with BBL on the full face, you could make the skin not only look a lot better but stay looking better with age," he said.

Preventative cosmetic treatments, coupled with a balanced lifestyle and a healthy diet, will help you maintain younger looking skin and "look and feeling great as you age."

A Parting Reminder

Dr. Bitter Jr.'s work and way of life prove that Ponce de León's quest has reached a noteworthy milestone: the aging process can be delayed with the proper techniques and technology.

“Even after 25 years, I continue to be amazed at the magic of broad band light on the skin. The future is very bright for those of us who want to keep our skin healthy and young,” he shared.

For more information on Dr. Bitter Jr.'s work and treatments, make sure that you check out his website at www.patrickbitterjrmd.com and his Instagram, [@patrickbitterjrmd](https://www.instagram.com/patrickbitterjrmd).

For information on Dr. Bitter's *Master the BBL & BBL HERO* In-Person and Online Preceptorships, email info@patrickbitterjrmd.com or visit <https://www.patrickbitterjrmd.com/physician-training-los-gatos/>