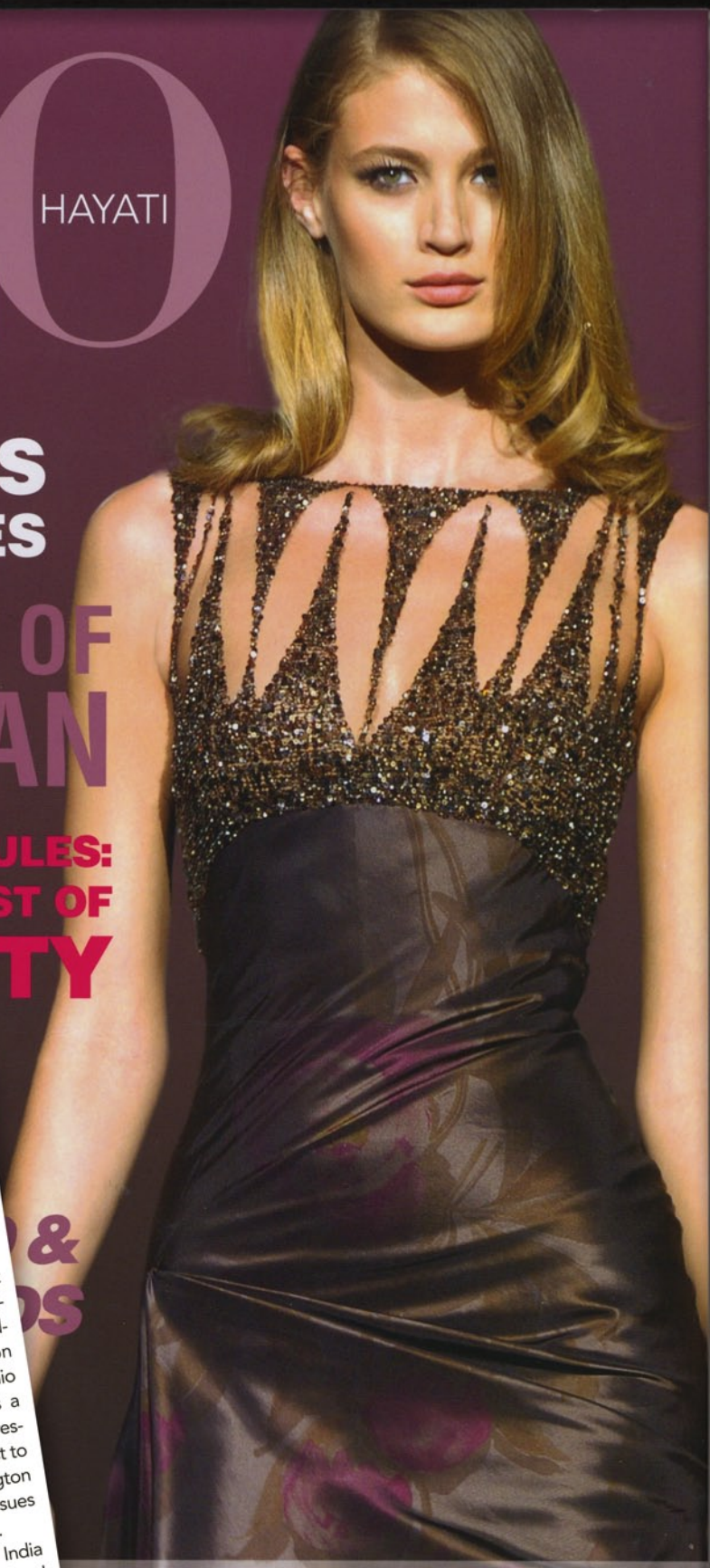


ALO HAYATI

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT
George Bitar M.D.



George Bitar is a Lebanese American board certified plastic surgeon, who practices in the Washington DC metropolitan area and enjoys volunteer work. Dr. Bitar grew up in Lebanon in a loving family of physicians, with traditions of helping others deeply engrained in its fabric. He immigrated to the United States at age 16 and received his higher education mainly on the East coast between Washington DC, Philadelphia, and Charlottesville, and has not lost touch with his Lebanese American heritage throughout his training. As a medical student at George Washington Medical School he was invited to a radio station to discuss his experiences as a Middle Eastern student. As a surgical resident, he was later invited as a panelist to the AAADC convention in Washington DC in 1995 to discuss pertinent issues facing Middle Eastern professionals. Volunteer medical missions to India and Vietnam followed, and he operated



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on children who had suffered severe burns, facial deformities, hand abnormalities, and women who were victims of domestic abuse. He also volunteered in operating on orphaned Chinese children who were flown to the U.S. for surgery to correct their facial deformities, which contributed to their being adopted here. "To paraphrase the commercial, seeing those orphans not have to live in orphanages any more was priceless, but for everything else there's MasterCard!"

Living in DC has its advantages

Since the Washington D.C. area has a unique mélange of World Bank cultural

Virginia to treat children with facial deformities or with local charities, such as Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund to provide college tuition for qualified but financially disadvantaged inner city teenagers, creating Career Day events and assisting in fundraising. "I love to see a wide-eyed teenager look and see that something which he thought was unattainable is suddenly now within reach."

He is also active in educational endeavors and has presented original plastic surgery research and clinical lectures in the Middle East at plastic surgery meetings such as the ARAB PLAST meeting in Dubai in 2000 and in Beirut at the International Society of

Medical School since 2002, and acts as an adviser to premedical students,

Middle Easterners and others when its time to get ready for medical school. He feels that it's very important to be informed about what options, pathways, and career choices lie ahead to make the best decisions when it comes to education. "It was tough going through medical school as an immigrant, and I like to share my experience with pre-medical students, so they will not make the same mistakes that I made."

Middle Eastern Organizations in DC

One organization that Dr. Bitar has supported is the National Arab American Medical Association (NAAMA), of which he is a member. Because of its unique position to help Middle Eastern-American physicians share their knowledge and get involved in the politics of medicine to be a more effective voice with the American Medical Association.

"I think it's very important for physicians to share knowledge and create associations to preserve the Middle Eastern medical, as well as social cultures."

The Mosaic Foundation, another charitable Foundation Dr. Bitar supports, is a good example of how the spouses of Middle Eastern Ambassadors in DC have been able to put together meetings with fashion shows, Arabic art lectures, and an Arabic Bazaar in the middle of DC to promote a friendly and cordial relationship with the citizens of the DC metropolitan area.

Renee Moawad Foundation, another Lebanese charitable organization that Dr. Bitar supports, was founded by Nayla Moawad, the wife of the late Lebanese president, Rene Moawad. The organization has a strong support system in DC, helping the needy, sending the money to Lebanon for underprivileged families, and honoring Lebanese Americans who have made a difference worldwide. ■

"Allow those around you to achieve their full potential, and only then can you achieve yours."

events, political functions, Middle Eastern social conferences for organizations such as the AAADC and AAI. International media, and embassy parties, it is the perfect place to be able to build bridges and make a difference. Having established a thriving plastic surgery practice in the metropolitan DC area, Dr. Bitar enjoys his time seeing patients and doing cosmetic surgery. "DC is no longer the dry politically conservative city it was twenty years ago. It is becoming a big metropolitan city with movies being filmed, thriving social and cultural life, and an influential Middle Eastern presence."

Building Bridges in the Middle Eastern American Society

When not in the operating room, he has volunteered and gotten involved at free clinics such as the Craniofacial Clinic at Fairfax Hospital in Northern

Aesthetic Plastic Surgery meeting in 2001. As an invited lecturer, Dr. Bitar presents his plastic surgery techniques in Lebanon at the American University of Beirut when he visits. He enjoys interacting with the faculty and medical students sharing with them what their counterparts in the U.S. are doing and some techniques he had acquired from international training. "Its fun to go back to Lebanon and work with plastic surgeons there. It gives me a sense of purpose and satisfaction. I had the privilege to train with some of the best plastic surgeons in the world, like Dr. Ivo Pitanguy in Brazil, and I feel its my duty to educate others as well".

An Adviser to Middle Eastern Students

Dr. Bitar has served on the admissions committee at George Washington