

# Mentor assists Vancouver plastic surgeon while filming surgery videos Trending

Things come full circle for Dr. Allen Gabriel

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Dr. Patrick Maxwell and Dr. Allen Gabriel work with members of their surgical team to cover a silicon implant with a deep skin graft during a breast reconstruction surgery at Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center. Maxwell is a highly accomplished plastic surgeon and mentor to Gabriel, a Vancouver plastic surgeon, who was a fellow under him from 2007 to 2008. Nathan Howard/The Columbian

[Photo Gallery](#)

When Dr. Allen Gabriel looked up and saw Dr. Patrick Maxwell standing across the operating table from him on Wednesday, things had come full circle.

And then, when Maxwell took a retractor from Gabriel during the surgery last week to free up Gabriel's hands and give his shoulders a rest, Gabriel had to pause and reflect on what was happening inside the operating room at Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center in Vancouver.

"Do you realize you're doing what I used to do for you?" Gabriel recalled telling Maxwell.

The genesis for Gabriel's observation stretches back to when the now 46-year-old Vancouver plastic surgeon was a 34-year-old fellow training under Maxwell in Nashville, Tenn. Gabriel used to assist Maxwell by holding his retractor, among many other things. Then last week, their positions inverted temporarily, when Maxwell traveled to Vancouver to film surgery educational videos with his mentee Gabriel, who trained under him from 2007 to 2008.

"The roles were completely reversed this time," Gabriel said in a phone interview Thursday.

It was the first time Maxwell has filmed videos in Clark County, even though he and Gabriel have collaborated on other videos, textbooks, papers and creating or refining innovative surgical procedures.

Maxwell is a pioneering plastic surgeon honored in a 2017 congressional resolution for his medical contributions. He also received the 2005 Presidential Award from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

"When I left, I never thought I would see him come and assist me in surgery," Gabriel said. "It was a dream and an honor."

The two speak on the phone about twice a month, Gabriel said. They are working on a textbook together, he added.

Gabriel became a fellow with Maxwell after doing six years of plastic surgery residency training in the department of plastic surgery at Loma Linda University Medical Center in Southern California. Gabriel said he was drawn to how Maxwell wanted to find better treatments for patients. Gabriel said Maxwell is never satisfied and is always on the hunt for creative, outside-the-box ways to improve surgeries.

Gabriel said he decided to pursue plastic surgery because he felt like he could "help someone heal, but at the same time make them feel whole." Maxwell explained he's enjoyed watching Gabriel become a pioneer in his own right. He remembers Gabriel didn't need too much direction during his fellowship.

"What was it like training Dr. Gabriel? I didn't really train him. I just got out of his way," Maxwell said with a smile. "I just enabled him to do what he's talented at and do what he has a passion for."

Maxwell said it's also nice to see Gabriel become a mentor to others now that Gabriel is further along in his medical career. Maxwell said no matter what, Gabriel keeps his passion for patients and passion for improving health care at the top of his priorities. Maxwell said that's a good foundation for a surgeon to have.

"As we say in education, our greatest pride as a teacher is for our students to become more advanced than the teacher," Maxwell said. "I have great pride and joy in observing what he's done and will continue to do."