

ASHLEY BRISSETTE

MD, MSc, FRCSC

COMPANY: Daily Practice

CLINICAL PRACTICES: New York Presbyterian Hospital and
Weill Cornell Medicine, New York

CLAIM TO FAME: First ophthalmologist to launch a skin care line



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Dr. Brissette delves into launching Daily Practice and her entrepreneurial journey.



“Daily Practice has committed to donating a portion of its proceeds to foundations fighting blindness. As the company and its revenue grow, I envision starting a Daily Practice foundation that funds surgeries globally to help people see better.”

CRST: What is Daily Practice, and why did you want to start the company?

Ashley Brissette, MD, MSc, FRCSC: The idea for developing an eyelid cleanser was inspired by my experiences in the clinic. Every day, patients express concerns about the cosmetic appearance of their eyes and ask me to recommend skin care products. I realized that, although many dermatologists have developed skin care lines, no ophthalmologist had yet. My goal is to create effective, science-backed products with safe, trusted ingredients.

CRST: What kinds of fears and doubts did you have to overcome to get Daily Practice going?

Dr. Brissette: Daily Practice is my first venture into entrepreneurship, and physicians and surgeons generally do not receive a lot of training in this area. We also tend to be perfectionists. Starting a company has forced me to trust my instincts and train myself. I read a lot of books about entrepreneurship. I asked a lot of people who started their own companies for advice.

I am a solo female founder. It is scary doing something on my own—totally self-funded and taking that leap—but I believe in the idea for the business. I started Daily Practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. So many barriers arose because of supply chain issues. There were times when I wanted to perfect the formula for my first product, and I would have to wait because someone at the lab had tested positive for COVID and the facility had to shut down.

Some good advice I got from other entrepreneurs was to remember that innovation is a long road. Things are going to take a lot longer than you thought they would, but you should stick with it because otherwise you're going to regret not moving forward. At the point of inflection, keep going because you will start to see progress if you work hard enough.

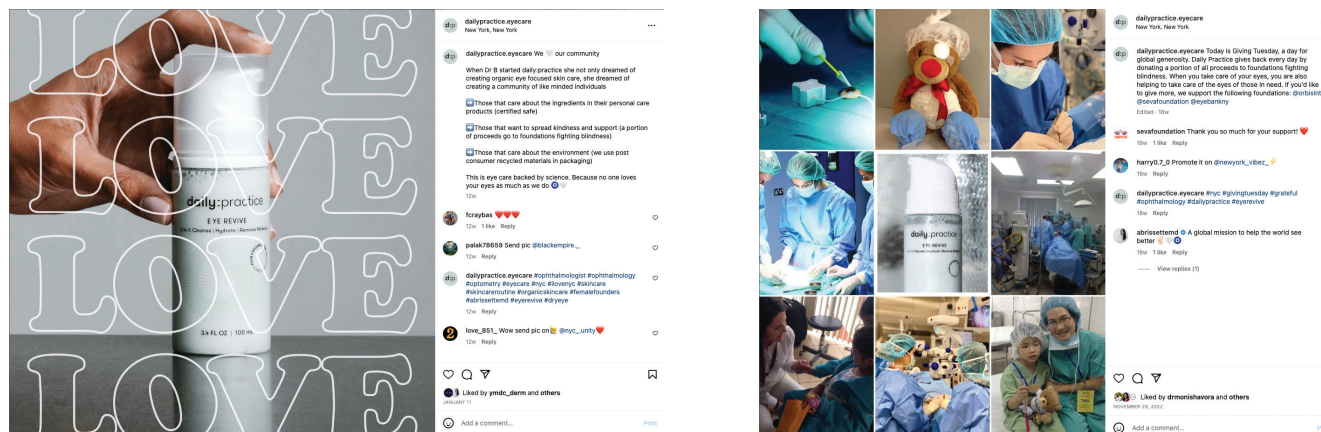


Figure. Two social media posts promoting Daily Practice.

CRST: Please describe the early days of your business. How did you learn to balance those responsibilities with maintaining a busy practice?

Dr. Brissette: The early days involved educating myself about the beauty/cosmetic and consumer goods spaces, marketing, search engine optimization, and how to start a company. I remember a prospective investor asked me to send my deck, and I responded, “What’s a deck?” It’s a different language. We train for years to perform cataract surgery. We can’t expect to wake up one morning and just start a business.

The early days also involved finding people to make my dream a reality. I interviewed several laboratories and chose to partner with one that invested in creating organic, sustainable products with safety-tested ingredients. Then, I worked with their chemist to develop my company’s first product. The process involved a lot of iterations.

This leads to your next question. I don’t think there’s ever a perfect balance of responsibilities. Some days, I’m good at doing some things; other days, I’m good at doing other things. I never try to balance everything at once. I spend a handful of days focused on surgery, postoperative visits, and patient care. Then, maybe over the weekend, I spend time on the company.

People often ask female surgeons, “How do you balance being a surgeon, a mother, and a daughter with all these other things?” I think it’s about focusing on one or two things that you can do well that day and not trying to accomplish everything all at once.

CRST: Has anything changed now that the company is a bit further along?

Dr. Brissette: I think it is a little easier to sense what is working and where I should focus a lot of my time and effort. Now that the company is off the ground, starting to delegate some tasks and roles has been important. I have a wonderful person who helps me with operations and marketing.

CRST: When will you consider Daily Practice a success?

Dr. Brissette: I launched Daily Practice in June 2022. I just closed my first seed fundraising round to expand the product offerings, so new products will become available within the next 6 to 12 months. I want to grow and expand the brand. I want to make daily eye care a part of everybody’s life—that’s why I called the company Daily Practice.

I’ll consider Daily Practice a success when I sell it to a big cosmetics company. I want people to see eye care sold alongside skin care and hair care in a Sephora or an Ulta Beauty. I am only half-joking when I say, “I want to make eye care sexy.”

CRST: What is your favorite part of being an entrepreneur?

Dr. Brissette: Surprisingly, it is a creative outlet for me. I have been running the company’s Instagram account for the past several months (Figure). Creating that content and collaborating with other content creators or influencers who like our first product and want to make videos for us—that process and the community

we’re building around the company have been amazing to me. Seeing people start to take care of their eyes and vision is just what I’d hoped.

I want to enact change at a global level. Daily Practice has committed to donating a portion of its proceeds to foundations fighting blindness. As the company and its revenue grow, I envision starting a Daily Practice foundation that funds surgeries globally to help people see better. More women than men are living with vision loss. Especially in the developing world, women have less access to health care and financial resources than men do because the women often stay home to take care of their families. I hope that a Daily Practice foundation can start to make vision care more equitable for women globally.

CRST: What advice would you give a fellow ophthalmologist who has a business idea they haven’t yet pursued?

Dr. Brissette: Get started. Don’t wait for everything to be perfect before trying to launch a business. Things are going to be in flux. You may make updates as you go along. Believe you can do it. ■

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- Financial disclosure: Owner (Daily Practice)