The Future of Aesthetics

According to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) over 20 million cosmetic surgical and nonsurgical procedures were performed worldwide in 2014, with Botulinum Toxin leading the way as the most popular cosmetic procedure overall for both men and women. Equally data from The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons has revealed that big cosmetic surgery procedures are declining in popularity, with the majority of the public seeking for understated subtle procedures such as eyelid surgery, face lifts and fat transfer. But what will the future trends be?

In an industry where new innovations and procedures are continuously being created, the pressure is on for aesthetic practitioners to stay up to date. Trends begin with an unrecognised desire and a handful of prospective patients. Usually a well-known figure endorses it and hurls this trend into the media landscape, transforming a small, unknown treatment into an overnight sensation, and before you’ve had a chance to recognise it, your practice will be inundated with requests new and previously unimaginable procedures.
A report by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery has discovered that consumers are more obsessed with celebrities now than ever before, so much so in fact that there is an increase in requests for celebrity procedures. This trend is fuelled by an all-consuming media society, where every aspect of their lives are lived online and through social media – this is especially true of the next generation of patients. There has been a distinct change in the demographic of people wanting cosmetic surgery, from middle aged patients wanting a more youthful appearance to 20-something individuals wanting to look like their favourite celebrity, and it’s this generation that will be shaping the future of aesthetics.

However despite the influence celebrities have on patient requests and the immense pressure surgeons are under to deliver this, there is a responsibility to weigh up demand from our customers with professional credibility and the long term well-being of our patients. This must be at the forefront of any case and a significant number of patient requests may have to be rejected if the images they have of their celebrity are an unrealistic representation of what they will actually look like in person or if there is a risk that the procedure could cause emotional or subsequent physical harm.

What does this mean for your practise? With mounting pressure to keep up with competition and provide competitive prices it’s easy to see why keeping up-to-date with trends is imperative to the success of your business. The medical world moves at a fast pace and, with new treatments and technologies constantly being created, it’s imperative for aesthetic practitioners to stay up-to-date with medical innovations.

There is also an obligation to understand what your patients are asking for, what they want and to know whether the procedure is right for them. Without staying updated there is a risk of becoming irrelevant and unable to cater for the next generation of patients. But at what age should this begin? How young is too young for patients to have cosmetic surgery? This has increasingly been a topic for discussion, and with a mounting number of teenage celebrities selecting non-surgical cosmetic treatments, the pressure to look ‘perfect’ is engrained at an early age. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 30,127 teenagers (aged 13-19) had Rhinoplasty in 2014 and a staggering 71,650 had laser hair removal. But whilst it may be fashionable for younger generations to have a cosmetic procedure, there are health implications for a patient whose body is still developing, not to mention the psychological effect it may have on someone so young.

The most challenging part for any surgeon is to manage the information influx. One way of doing this is to set aside a certain amount of time a day/week where you dedicate yourself to reading and brushing up, this may even involve reading publications aimed at younger audiences in order to understand the media they are exposed to. But remember it’s impossible to know and practise everything – be realistic and selective. Being a ‘jack of all trades’ isn’t practical or a good business model. Rather you should know your niche, tailor your practise for that particular audience and gain consumer trust.

The past year has seen several trends burn brightly and die quickly, for example sculpted abs, toe liposuction and anti-aging injections for the hands, and whilst many of these procedures may have had their 10-minutes-of-fame, it could be a sign of things to come. Many trends are targeted
in helping the patient resolve a precise cosmetic problem, and they are a reflection of what your patients and prospective patients really want, they shouldn’t be ignored.

Culture will ways be a factor in cosmetic surgery trends and as society continues to strive for perfection, it seems as though the future of aesthetics will continue to evolve. Once perceived as a taboo, something that patients wanted to hide, cosmetic surgery has now been accepted into our culture. It’s evident that the industry has come a long way, however the boundaries will continue to be pushed and challenged.

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