

# CHOSING A FACIAL PLASTIC SURGEON

## Myths and facts

### **Plastic surgery is perfect**

**Not true.** Cosmetic surgery only provides variable degrees of improvement, but not perfection. Every single patient is dissatisfied with some aspect of the results of her operation. A happy patient is one for whom the benefits of the operation outweigh the drawbacks, and who accepts the limitations of the operation. So it is of great importance to choose the right surgeon to take the very best of a cosmetic procedure.

### **Unsatisfied patients**

**It is a fact** that patients not completely happy with his or her surgery outcome are very common. In may be because of truly poor results. On the other hand there could be unrealistic expectations derived from inaccurate massive media information to the public, such as it is seen in many TV realities. A patient who has unrealistically high expectations will not be satisfied with his or her results, even if the improvement achieved was dramatic. The surgeon can never satisfy unrealistic expectations.

### **Face cosmetic surgical procedures are small surgeries**

**False.** Since face anatomic structures are small some people may believe that face procedures are small and simple ones. For instance rhinoplasties are sometimes offered by some surgeons as a small extra job, being the central one a liposuction or a mamoplasty. The true is rhinoplasty is by far the most difficult cosmetic procedure of the entire body, so it demands special surgeons, and special care and planning. Many excellent body cosmetic surgeons are really inexpert nose surgeons.

### **Only one type of doctors are trained to perform face cosmetic surgery**

**False.** Worldwide doctors who do face surgery come from different specialties with different academic backgrounds such as:

- 1. Plastic surgeons:** 4 years of formal training, they do all cosmetic procedures on face and body.
- 2. Otolaryngologist – facial plastic surgeon:** 4 years of formal training only in face and neck. They do functional, reconstructive and esthetic surgery only in face, most frequently rhinoplasties. Most face surgeries in the U.S. are performed by this kind of doctors.
- 3. Esthetic clinician or surgeon:** General practitioner with no further formal training. In my opinion their function in facial cosmetic procedures is limited to providing non surgical care (fillers, thread lifts, lasers etc.)
- 4. Dermatologists:** The most expert doctors in cosmetic procedures of the skin (Botox, peelings etc).
- 5. Ophthalmologists:** They perform eyelid surgeries, some of them are sub specialized in oculoplastic surgery, then being really experts in plastic surgery of these structures.
- 6. Maxillofacial surgeon:** Either a dentist or a physician with formal training in facial bone functional and esthetic surgeries (except the nose).

### **How to begin looking for the right surgeon**

In my opinion any of the six groups of doctors can safely perform face procedures in specific circumstances. There are scientific societies that have lists of doctors which

may be the first place to look if you don't have specific references from other satisfied patients.

### **Your surgeon must belong to a specific “X” society**

**Not true.** A Plastic Surgery Society membership, by itself, means almost nothing. Remember that societies are not universities, they don't give titles, besides in Colombia they don't perform board examinations; they do not evaluate the surgeon's manual dexterity, his artistic talents, whether he cares about his patients' well-being, or whether his results are excellent, just passable, or bad. You don't just want a member of some big society with expensive publicity in the media; you want a doctor who can deliver excellent results.

Though difficult to believe, society membership is a terrible exclusive selection criterion. There are at least 6 different societies. And some of them spread excluding publicity to favor only their members. Excluding sometimes the best facial plastic surgeons of some specific areas of the face, for example oculoplastics for the eyelids, otolaryngologists for rhinoplasties and dermatologists for Botox injections.

Next time a doctor spend time with you criticizing other doctors because they don't belong to his specialty or his society, you tell him that what you are really interested in is only in his expertise and results.

### **Publicity**

The big and more expensive is not necessarily the best.

Beware of promises of perfection in advertising

### **Other sources of information though not the real best one**

Recommendation from other patients (make sure that the surgeon performed on your friend the same kind of surgery your planning to have done on yourself).

Recommendations from other doctors or estheticists are also valid.

### **The true key point in choosing a facial plastic surgeon**

He or she must have completed formal general medical school, besides he or she must have at least a 4 year formal training with strong emphasis in esthetic surgery, specifically in face surgery if possible.

You may begin by checking society listings or publicity on the yellow pages, and chose a maximum of two or three doctors. Make appointments and interview them extensively, ask whatever you want –you have that right-. And most important **ask your doctor to show you results.** If you are satisfied with the results and answers, and you develop empathy and trust maybe that is the right surgeon for you.

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The preceding concepts show only the author's opinions, they don't reflect in any way the policies or thinking of the Colombian Society of Facial Plastic Surgery and Rhinology or any other society.

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