



Chances are you, or someone you know, has had some sort of cosmetic procedure in recent years. But does this mean we're becoming a nation of appearance-addicts, or are we simply making the most of medical advances to improve our looks, our self confidence, and our desire to enjoy live life to the full in a body that is up to the task?

The Cosmetic Surgery Controversy

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Murray Beagley

Cosmetic Plastic Surgeon
Murray Beagley

MB ChB,
FRACS (Plast.)



THE SERVICES OFFERED INCLUDE:

- Breast enlargement, reduction and lifting
- Abdominal recontouring
- Eyelid rejuvenation
- Genitoplasty surgery including circumcision, Peyronies and labiaplasty
- Ear reshaping
- Liposuction and liposculpture
- Botox® and dermal filler treatments
- Peripheral nerve surgery
- Complex hand surgery
- Surgical treatment of skin cancers
- Treatment of scars

It appears the decision to have cosmetic surgery is a choice more and more New Zealand men and women are making. Many people now have friends who have had successful cosmetic procedures and as they are happy to talk about it freely, it is no longer the unmentionable subject it once was. Cosmetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgeon Murray Beagley explains, “New Zealand is experiencing an upsurge in the demand for Cosmetic Surgery. There is a much greater awareness and readiness to accept such surgery due to the ever increasing media exposure including the glossy magazines and also programs like Dr 90210.”

With cosmetic procedures available for just about any area of the body, it seems now possible to rectify any less-than-perfect pout or pose. But should surgeons be agreeing to surgeries many would consider unnecessary? Beagley explains that both the surgeon and the patient should be

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in agreement about the planned surgery. “Any decision regarding treatment should always be a combined one and both have the right to decline undertaking a procedure. The lines can be blurred however, and one must rely on the surgeon’s moral and ethical integrity to council the patient accordingly.”

Cosmetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgeon Martin Rees agrees it is a difficult area. “The trouble is that ‘normal’ encompasses a very wide range of appearances. Clearly some abnormalities such as those resulting from congenital defects, trauma or cancer may be an obvious cause of health or appearance issues. But for others, the effects of aging, weight fluctuations or other natural processes can become an ever-present cause of concern and even contribute to a debilitating lack of confidence. What is important is that the surgeon ensures the patient has a full understanding of what is involved with the surgery, what outcome can be realistically expected, as well as what risks and possible complications may arise during or after the surgery.”

One of the most recent and controversial developments in the arena of cosmetic surgery is that of ‘medical tourism.’ In a similar fashion to a travel agency, medical tourism companies facilitate travel and accommodation as well as arranging the chosen surgery for clients. The main draw-card for patients is the low costs of surgery incurred in countries such as Malaysia and Thailand. But is it a risk worth taking? Rees explains, “My concern is a lot of these overseas surgeons are not trained plastic surgeons. I’ve

seen some horrific results from patients who’ve come back from an overseas surgery with huge chunks of dead tissue and rotting wounds and others who’ve developed deep vein thrombosis from flying long-haul and not having any protection. There are definitely a lot of dangers involved and people need to be aware of these. I certainly think the risks outweigh the advantages.”

So how can those considering cosmetic surgery in New Zealand be sure that our industry has sufficient regulations and boundaries to ensure patient safety? “We are always striving to improve patient safety,” explains Beagley. “This includes ensuring that surgeons undertaking cosmetic surgery are appropriately trained and are not just ‘cosmetic cowboys’. In addition, regulations are in place to maintain patient safety during operations by maintaining strict standards of sterility in the operating rooms and appropriate monitoring. This also includes the ability to safely deliver anaesthetic agents which in most cases requires a fully qualified anaesthetist.”

The subject of cosmetic surgery is certainly no longer the taboo it once was and like any form of surgery, the cosmetic variety has its share of risks and benefits. Fortunately, the majority of those in the New Zealand industry strive to improve awareness, safety, and technical advancement for those wanting a nip, tuck, or a total makeover. 

With thanks to Martin Rees and Murray Beagley.



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