
Will the Real Aesthetic Surgeon Please Stand Up



BY STEVEN H. DAYAN, MD, FACS

I am amused by the bantering in the public arena of the various surgical academies positioning themselves as the only or as the most qualified group to perform aesthetic surgical procedures. The public is barraged with very expensive and well thought out public relation campaigns spilled out into newspapers, magazine and TV ads in addition to news stories aimed at shaping your opinion on who is the real aesthetic surgeon.

You must understand that most every doctor went into medicine for the altruistic sense of helping his fellow man. Initially American society allowed physicians to practice medicine without regard for financial responsibility. Unfortunately doctor's practiced without any concern for expenses. And as in any other field that runs without checks and balances there was abuse of the system by a negligent few. Healthcare ran fiscally out of control. This chaos was followed by heavy restrictions. Physicians now had to answer and justify their expert opinion to non-medical professional only interested in the bottom line. This added to the formula creating the proper ingredients for the explosion of aesthetic medicine.

Elective aesthetic procedures have allowed the physicians an avenue back to a one-on-one relationship with his/her patient. It also has provided a source of revenue that is not polluted, second-guessed or

adjusted by third party payers. Unfortunately, it also has led to inexperienced and poorly trained physicians performing services for which they were not experts. Residency and fellowship programs have responded by offering aesthetic surgery training. Today there are many qualified formal programs teaching young surgeons ethical and appropriate methods of aesthetic surgery. The problem now becomes that every surgical society believes that they have the best-trained and only surgeons qualified to provide the public service. The truth is that each one of these societies has both well trained and less than ideally trained physicians providing aesthetic surgery services. Your job when seeking treatment is to be thorough in your research but not to be swayed by a public relations campaign. A frequently asked question is are you board certified? Well yes this may be a good question and perhaps even the best question but it also can be a misleading question. There are many boards that certify physicians to perform aesthetic surgery and no one board has exclusivity on the best or most qualified physicians. Just because you seek treatment by physician in a certain board does not mean you are safe from potential complications. Did you know that one of the most commonly cited reports on complications from aesthetic surgery is from the hands of board certified physicians? Also a board can be meaningless, especially when the standards to achieve certification are lax. Tomorrow I can start the Official board of Lake Shore Drive Physicians and as president of this new board I believe that only my board is qualified to perform earlobe repair. I can create and place an impressive looking framed certificate on my office wall. If you call my office I can instruct my office staff to tell you that "Yes I am board certified" and I can tell you I think you

should only seek out physicians certified by the Board of Lake Shore Drive surgeons. Yes I am being facetious but it is to prove a point. It is important to research the requisite standards your surgeon endured to achieve board certification. And although a qualified board is an important component to a physician's credentials it is not the ultimate answer to who is the most qualified to be your surgeon. Certainly I think it is essential to know your physician's background and training but I also suggest you interview your surgeon. Ask him/her if they have hospital privileges to perform the procedures in question. Is your surgeon academically affiliated with a major University? Ask how often he/she performs the procedure in question. Seek out

others who have been treated by this physician, ask if you may speak with these individuals or be allowed to see the results these patients achieved. Even seek out a second opinion before you commit.

Then trust your instincts. You have to be comfortable with this person. Is this physician a listener truly interested in your desires or does he or she just tell you what is going to make you happy. Is he or she going to remember you after your surgery and continue to be involved in your care and well being or are you just placed on an assembly line of patients? Be certain you feel comfortable in his/her office because you may make many visits over the next few weeks. Once you made your decision be content that you chose the right surgeon for you and that you thought it out fully. Then go forward.



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