

Plastic surgery and the power of social media

By [Frank Graewe](#)

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If we talk about trends in plastic surgery we have to talk about social media.



@buzzfuss [123rf.com](#)

Social media has become a game changer in the health and beauty industry and has made a vast impact on plastic surgery during the last decade and this is likely going to increase in the future.

Posting face pictures and selfies on sites like Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat has led to a significant increase in surgical and non-surgical facial procedures in women. This includes surgery of the eyelids, nose and facelift surgery. Most popular on the non-surgical side are still botulinum toxin and fillers, but there is an increase in chemical peelings, micro-needling and mesotherapy with combination treatments using newer energy based equipment for skin tightening. The average age of women undergoing procedures has also dropped significantly.

The Kim Kardashian effect

Another interesting phenomenon of social media in relation to plastic surgery is the way in which celebrities reach millions via social media platforms and how this can set new trends. Reality star, Kim Kardashian has popularised several plastic surgery procedures. One of them, the vampire facelift has become a popular new facial rejuvenation treatment after Kim Kardashian tried it out and was showcased on YouTube during the procedure.

The vampire facelift is a type of mesotherapy where the patient's own blood is taken and the platelet fraction is isolated to produce platelet-rich plasma. This is injected superficially under the skin. The platelets disintegrate and release growth factors into the skin which are believed to stimulate stem cells and skin regeneration. The vampire facelift has become a popular treatment worldwide for facial enhancement and rejuvenation in spite of still a lack of long-term scientific evidence.

Another new plastic surgery trend evolved after reports on Kardashian's body transformation appeared in the media: from a normal-sized buttock to a more curvaceous look. Speculation is running high that she had undergone plastic surgery to achieve that new look. Although she strongly denied having had any surgical procedures, the rumours are still around. It has been suggested that she had body-contouring surgery, in her case liposuction around her tummy and waist to remove fat. This would give her that narrow look around her waistline. Then the same fat is processed and re-injected with specifically developed techniques into the buttock area to plump up her butt. Since she had this mysterious change in body shape the numbers and requests for similar type of operations are increasing steadily.

The same procedure, taking fat from one area and putting it back in another is even more popular and ever increasing in facial rejuvenation surgery to give volume and a youthful look back to the face in ageing faces and has become an alternative to breast implants in breast enlargement surgery.

That said, number one and two procedures in America are still breast enlargement and liposuction.

Facelifts experiencing a comeback

Facelift surgery had been on the decline for many years, but is now experiencing a comeback with more face and neck lifts being performed. One reason for this is as mentioned above the fact that more face pictures are posted on social media sites. Secondly, if a patient suffers of a severe degree of skin and muscle laxity in the face and neck area, surgery is still the best option.

Parallel to this trend we are seeing a lot of newer less or minimally invasive techniques for skin sagging and laxity, giving those hope who are reluctant to go for a surgical procedure and rather opt for smaller treatments with less downtime, and are happy with smaller results. This includes energy-based treatments and combination treatments to increase collagen production and cause skin tightening.

Bariatric surgery

A trend that will increase in coming years is caused by obesity with its endemic proportions that has led to a steep increase in bariatric surgery to lose weight. Massive weight loss due to lifestyle changes or bariatric surgery has created the need for removal of vast amounts of sagging skin. Bariatric plastic surgery deals with this problem and has an armamentarium of new and effective techniques. We will likely see much more patients requesting body lifting and body contouring procedures after massive weight loss in the future.

Other news that has just hit the media is a new condition associated with breast implants. It is a very rare type of lymphoma, that is associated with breast implants. It is called anaplastic large cell lymphoma (ALCL) and the recorded incidence in patients with implants is extremely low with about 400 cases reported worldwide. It could lead to patients choosing alternative options for breast enlargement like fat grafting with own autologous fat in coming years over conventional breast implants.

Looking at reconstructive surgery there has been a steady increase in immediate breast reconstruction where the surgery is performed in a team effort and part or all of the breast is removed and then reconstructed in the same session instead of doing the cancer surgery first and the reconstruction at a later or delayed stage. Patients do not want to wake up after mastectomies without breasts and there is a growing tendency to manage breast cancer in multidisciplinary teams. Most teams have a plastic surgeon on board who is available to do immediate reconstructions during breast cancer surgery.

Fat grafting has gained lots of popularity in reconstructive and cosmetic surgery recently and its safety in breast cancer

patients has been questioned due to the possibility that the high amount of growth factors and mesenchymal stem cells in fat tissue can stimulate cancer growth. This could not be confirmed in recently published studies and there is increasing evidence claiming that fat grafting is safe.

Mommy makeover

A paradigm shift in the way procedures are performed in plastic surgery is the move from single procedures limited to one area or problem to multiple procedures done combined within one operation. An example is the so-called mommy makeover procedure. This describes a tummy tuck combined with a breast lift but it could also include some liposuction and vaginal rejuvenation, all done in the same session. Modern anaesthesia techniques make it possible to safely perform combination procedures that can last many hours.

ABOUT FRANK GRAEWE

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