

# Part VI

## *Choosing a Physician*

All of the procedures discussed in this book must be performed by a physician or on the order of a physician. With this in mind, it is of the utmost importance to have a physician involved in your medical care. Unfortunately, too often, procedures are performed in settings more reminiscent of a business than a medical practice. Though laws vary by state, in general, a physician has to be associated with a facility which dispenses medications such as facial fillers or performs laser treatments. The definition of association varies by state and may be having a physician on site at all times to having someone who is responsible for the clinic but is not required to attend the clinic.

Though the actual procedure of injection is not a technically difficult procedure, determining the correct procedure for each patient and dealing with any complications can be. Seek out a practice where at least the initial consultation is performed by a physician and there is a physician readily available in case of complications. The ideal practice will have a physician who performs all procedures. Beware of facilities where injections or procedures are performed by non-physicians without direct physician oversight.

There is no set method to choosing a physician. First and foremost, you must be comfortable with the person to whom you are trusting your face. The rest of the suggestions provided should be taken together as a whole to make your decision. No one factor is more important than another in determining a competent physician. Taken as a whole, they provide a good starting point to get the best results possible.

## **Board Certification**

Board Certification refers to accreditation a physician receives by completing some form of testing to demonstrate competence in a specific field. In the United States, the standards for board certification are administered by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), a not-for-profit organization. The ABMS is composed of 24 approved medical specialty boards. These boards include:

- allergy and immunology
- anesthesiology
- colon and rectal surgery
- dermatology
- emergency medicine
- family medicine
- internal medicine
- medical genetics
- neurological surgery
- nuclear medicine
- obstetrics and gynecology
- ophthalmology
- orthopaedic surgery
- otolaryngology
- pathology
- pediatrics
- physical medicine and rehabilitation
- plastic surgery
- preventative medicine
- psychiatry and neurology
- radiology
- surgery
- thoracic surgery
- urology

Each board has its own set of criteria to become board certified. Generally these criteria include completion of an MD or DO degree program in the United States or equivalency testing for foreign medical graduates; completion of a board approved training program (often referred to as residency); completion of a written and oral examination; and for some

surgical specialties, demonstration of skill competency through a certain period of time in practice or submission of case logs. Each board as well may have specialty areas which provide additional certification through associated boards. Before 2000, board certification was performed once in a physician's career. As of 2006, board certification must be renewed every 10 years though certain physicians have been grandfathered into the lifetime certificates.

The three boards generally acknowledged to train physicians in cosmetic and reconstructive skin procedures are: The American Board of Dermatology, the American Board of Otolaryngology, and the American Board of Plastic Surgery. According to the ABMS website:

- *“A Dermatologist is trained to diagnose and treat pediatric and adult patients with disorders of the skin, mouth, external genitalia, hair and nails, as well as a number of sexually transmitted diseases. The Dermatologist has had additional training and experience in the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancers, melanomas, moles and other tumors of the skin, the management of contact dermatitis and other allergic and nonallergic skin disorders, and in the recognition of the skin manifestations of systemic (including internal malignancy) and infectious diseases. Dermatologists have special training in dermatopathology and in the surgical techniques used in dermatology. They also have expertise in the management of cosmetic disorders of the skin such as hair loss and scars and the skin changes associated with aging.”*
- *“An Otolaryngologist-Head and Neck Surgeon, provides comprehensive medical and surgical care for patients with diseases and disorders that affect the ears, nose and throat, the respiratory and upper alimentary systems, and related structures of the head and neck. The Otolaryngologist diagnoses and provides medical and/or surgical therapy or prevention of diseases, allergies, neoplasms, deformities, disorders and/or injuries of the ears, nose, sinuses, throat, respiratory and upper alimentary systems, face, jaws and the other head and neck systems. Head and neck oncology, facial plastic and reconstructive surgery and the treatment of disorders of hearing and voice are fundamental areas of expertise.” Further training can be undertaken to obtain a subspecialty in Plastic surgery Within the Head and Neck.*
- *“A Plastic Surgeon deals with the repair, reconstruction or replacement of physical defects of form or function involving the skin, musculoskeletal system, craniomaxillofacial structures, hand, extremities, breast and trunk and external genitalia or cosmetic enhancement of these areas of the body. Cosmetic surgery is an essential component of plastic surgery. The Plastic Surgeon uses cosmetic surgical principles to both improve overall appearance and to optimize the outcome of reconstructive procedures. The surgeon uses aesthetic surgical principles not only to improve undesirable qualities of*

*normal structures but in all reconstructive procedures as well.*

*Special knowledge and skill in the design and surgery of grafts, flaps and free tissue transfer and replantation is necessary. Competence in the management of complex wounds, the use of implantable materials and in tumor surgery is required. Plastic Surgeons have been prominent in the development of innovative techniques such as microvascular and craniomaxillofacial surgery, liposuction and tissue transfer. Anatomy, physiology, pathology and other basic sciences are fundamental to the specialty.*

*Competency in Plastic Surgery implies an amalgam of basic medical and surgical knowledge, operative judgment, technical expertise, ethical behavior and interpersonal skills to achieve problem resolution and patient satisfaction”*

Though not directly stated in their mission, ophthalmologists are trained in cosmetic and reconstructive surgery of the eye and surrounding structures and certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology. Ophthalmologists can also undergo further training in oculoplastic surgery though no board exists for certifying oculoplastic surgeons.

There is no national law which sets forth criteria for what organization can call themselves a board or provide physicians with board certification. Some ‘board certification’ involves simply paying a fee and receiving a certificate, similar to belonging to a medical society. Should you question the qualifications for a board certification, be sure to visit the board’s web site. Reputable national boards will provide the qualifications for certification and identify qualified physicians. At minimum, the certification should include a written examination, verbal examination, and some form of continuing maintenance of certification.

Remember that appropriate board certification ensures that a physician has the minimum competency in his/her field. This does not guarantee results or that a physician has had appropriate training in newer procedures introduced since residency.

## **Training**

Ensure that a physician is trained to do what they are doing. If a physician is board certified and the certifying board condones cosmetic and reconstructive procedures, this will ensure a basic training has been undertaken. If a physician is board certified by a board which does not specifically deal with cosmetic and reconstructive concerns, ensure that the physician has gone through additional extensive training in cosmetic

surgery. For some this may include additional observation of physicians or extensive training courses. Beware though of physicians who have a certification from a weekend course or some other process to do something which is completely outside of their initial medical training.

Though board certification will ensure the basic training to participate in a particular field of medicine, just completing a residency does not ensure that a physician is trained in the procedures they are performing. Simply asking how many of a procedure a physician has performed also is not completely informative. Adding 2+2 and getting 5 several hundred times does not make it happen. Similarly, just because someone has performed 500 facelifts, doesn't mean that they perform them well or can adequately address the desires you have for your procedure. If a procedure is fairly new, determine what training a physician has undergone and if they have performed the procedure before. Training and experience must be taken together with all of the other criteria before choosing a physician.

### **Faculty Appointments**

Physicians do not have to be employed by a university to have an appointment to the faculty of the university. Often, private practice physicians will volunteer time to teach at medical schools and residency programs. For their time, they may receive an appointment as a clinical faculty to the medical school. These appointments usually do not have any monetary reimbursement associated with them but reflect the physician's commitment to continuing education.

### **Articles and Presentations**

Though the demands of a busy practice can be great, physicians will often publish peer reviewed articles in scientific journals and speak at national and international physician society meetings. There is generally no financial reward for these presentations and journal articles. By writing and presenting, a physician shows commitment to continuing education, illustrates that they have techniques which other physicians are interested in learning, and demonstrates that they have enough patient flow to report results in the medical literature. Peer review indicates that the articles or presentations are reviewed by other physicians in the same field before publishing. In contrast to columns published in

mainstream media, a peer reviewed publication requires approval of other physicians before publishing helping to ensure that topical and factual presentations are presented.

### **Hospital Privileges**

Unfortunately all medical procedures have some risks. Even injections have risks. Though complications with larger cosmetic procedures are rare, they do occur and hence the need for informed consent. For a physician to practice medicine, hospital privileges are not required. Unfortunately, some complications from cosmetic procedures do require hospitalization and as such, having a physician who can admit you to the hospital can be life saving. If your physician does not have hospital privileges, you may be entrusted to the care of someone who is not familiar with the procedure that you underwent or you may have to be sent to a facility with a higher level of care a distance from your initial physician. Be sure to ask your physician where they have hospital privileges.

### **Second Opinion**

As you will read in the advertising pitfalls section, there are very few, if any, procedures in the world which are performed by only one surgeon. It is wise to obtain a second opinion, especially about cosmetic surgery where selection of procedures is probably more important than the technical skill of the surgeon.

## Additional Web References

<http://www.abms.org>

The official web site of the American Board of Medical Specialties. To determine if your physician is board, certified, visit the ABMS web site.

<http://aboto.org>

The American Board of Otolaryngology provides board certification for head and neck surgeons in the United States. As part of the Otolaryngology Board, according to the ABOto web site: 'Head and neck oncology and facial plastic and reconstructive surgery are fundamental areas of expertise.'

<http://www.abfprs.org>

The American Board of Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery provides board certification for surgeons who have done advanced training specifically in head and neck cosmetic and reconstructive surgery. Though not a member board of the ABMS, the ABFPRS is the certifying board for Plastic Surgery Within the Head and Neck, a recognized subspecialty of the American Board of Otolaryngology and ABMS.

<https://www.abplsurg.org>

The American Board of Plastic Surgery provides board certification for plastic surgeons. These surgeons have experience in full body plastic and reconstructive surgery but are not necessarily specialized in facial aesthetics.

<http://www.abderm.org>

The American Board of Dermatology provides board certification for all dermatologists practicing in the United States.

<http://www.abop.org>

The American Board of Ophthalmology provides board certification for all ophthalmologists in the United States.





# Part VI

## *Choosing a Facility*

**W**hen contemplating any procedure, it is important to consider not only who is going to perform the procedure but where it is going to be performed. Though laws vary by state, a physician can generally perform a procedure almost anywhere.

### **Physician Offices**

Many procedures both surgical and non-surgical can be safely performed in a physician's office. Some physicians may maintain outpatient surgery centers in their office which are appropriately accredited. For physicians who are performing simple procedures in the office, accreditation for the office is sometimes not possible. In these cases, it is essential to ensure that the physician has a basic set of first aid equipment readily available in case of emergency. The ideal equipment would include oxygen, medications to deal with allergic reactions, and other advanced life support equipment. In addition, the physician and his staff should be current on at least basic life support skills and preferably on advanced life support skills. Even with simple injections, life threatening anaphylactic reactions can occur. Having a physician with appropriate skills and equipment can be life saving.

### **Hospitals and Surgery Centers**

Like physicians, facilities such as hospitals and outpatient surgery centers have accrediting boards as well. These accrediting boards ensure a minimum set of policies, procedures, and equipment to ensure patient

safety. In general, hospitals are accredited by the Joint Commission (JCAHO). Facilities which take Medicare must meet federal guidelines of patient safety in order to ensure reimbursement. Forty-three states require licensure for outpatient or ambulatory surgery centers. Hospitals

*Fact*

JCAHO accredits over 15,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States

and outpatient surgery centers, including those in physician's offices, can apply for peer reviewed accreditation through the JCAHO, the Accreditation Association

for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC), or the American Association for Accreditation for Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (AAAASF). Physician's offices where procedures are performed using only local anesthesia are generally not eligible for accreditation.

Accreditation is voluntary and reflects a facility's recognition that patient safety is a priority. Accreditation must be renewed at regular intervals, every 2-5 years depending on the accrediting organization and the result of the previous survey.

## Additional Web References

*<http://www.jointcommission.org>*

The official web site of the JCAHO. Visit the web site to determine if a facility is accredited by JCAHO.

*<http://www.aaahc.org>*

The official web site of the AAAHC. Visit the web site to determine if a facility is accredited by the AAAHC.

*<http://www.aaaasf.org>*

The official web site of the AAAASF. Visit the web site to determine if a facility is accredited by the AAAASF.



# Part VII

## *Advertising Pitfalls*

**B**ecause of the large amount of money to be made with cosmetic surgery procedures, competition is fierce. This necessitates large budgets for advertising. Unfortunately, all advertising must be looked at under a microscope. After all, the advertising is designed to wow a person into coming into the office to be sold a procedure. Physicians are held to a higher standard in advertising than the general public. Unlike corporations which have civil laws to abide by, physicians have the same laws plus additional laws created by each state's medical boards. Drug companies are also held to a high advertising standard as their advertising is also policed by the US Food and Drug Administration. Unfortunately not all cosmetic advertising is performed by physicians or drug companies. While most advertising by physicians is very reputable, some can be misleading. Patients must take all of the advertising in stride. This section aims to help identify some of the pitfalls of common advertising techniques so that appropriate scrutiny can be made of the advertising.

### **Before and After Photographs**

Before and after photographs can be an excellent guide to a physician's results but must be taken with several words of warning.

- The photographs should be taken with the same background, the same lighting, and with the same camera and lens. In the age of digital photography, the photographs should also be taken with the same resolution settings. Photographs which are taken with

different backgrounds and different lighting can produce various shadows which can slightly alter results.

- Both before and after photographs should be ideally taken without makeup. There are several good examples of celebrities before and after makeup including <http://stupidcelebrities.net/2008/08/30/celebrities-without-makeup-photos/>. A before shot without makeup and an after shot with makeup can be very deceiving.
- Make sure that the photographs are taken at the same angle and with the same head position. For face shots, head position is very important. There are very well described positions for facial photograph and one of the most important is to ensure that the head is vertical. The best measure is to ensure that the top of the ear canal is level with the bottom of the eye socket. For example, if you are comparing the ability of a procedure to improve neck skin, if the head is elevated, neck skin will be improved. Conversely, if the head is tilted down, neck skin will worsen. Therefore, to evaluate before and after photographs, it is very important to ensure that the camera angle and person's facial angles are the same. If not, the angle may create the improvement, not the procedure.
- When looking at photographs, understand which procedures the patient had. Although a patient may only be looking for a facelift procedure, the before and after photographs may show patients who had multiple procedures. This can be difficult to appreciate and sometimes it is wise to question the physician as to which procedures were performed.
- Don't dismiss a surgeon simply because they do not have before and after photographs, especially when it comes to facial surgery.

*Fact*

In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission is responsible for consumer protection, including advertising oversight.

Photographs of patients must be used with their express written consent. Patients undergoing cosmetic surgery, especially of the face, are often reluctant to allow their identifiable photographs to be used for everyone to see.

- Remember – photographs cannot be verified. With today's technology it is possible to alter images to take out blemishes imperceptibly.
- Most before and after photographs only show a physician's best results. Consider looking at a *consecutive* series of before and after photographs. While it is difficult to get a consecutive series of patients who are willing to use their photographs, 5-10 sets of photographs is optimal to really illustrate a physician's results. This will allow you to see various features and their results. In this way, you won't just see the best that a physician has to offer but you will see the most likely results and possibly some less than optimal results.
- Make sure to view long term results, not just immediate results. For some procedures, like Botox® Cosmetic and facial fillers, long term results are impossible. For laser and surgical procedures, long term results are the key to the procedure. Make sure to look at results not only at one month but also one year, and even longer after the procedure. Some procedures look great at a month but their results may not be long lasting.
- Remember that everyone is different. Before and after photographs illustrate the results obtained for a specific patient. This means a specific person's problem, their specific genetic makeup, their specific skin complexion, their specific medical problems, their specific postoperative course, and their specific procedures. Even though a physician performs the exact same procedure with the exact same technical skill, they may not get the exact same results.
- Determine if the photographs are those taken of the physician's patients or if the photographs are provided by a national company. Though the results may be great, they may not represent the ability of the specific physician to perform the procedure.

## Testimonials

Testimonials can be very compelling statements. To hear another patient extol the virtues of a physician is very heart warming. Unfortunately the biggest drawback to a testimonial is that it cannot be verified. The testimonial can be completely fabricated or can be altered from the original context. There is no way to tell. Several states have limitations on the types of testimonials which can be made and advertised. Assuming the veracity of the testimonial, it will represent one person's experience. Given a physician sees several hundred people a year, this may not represent an accurate cross section of the practice. This applies to both positive and negative testimonials.

## The "X" Procedure

There are many procedures in medicine which have been repackaged and marketed under a different name. Beware of procedures which are marketed as proprietary and being performed by a limited number of surgeons. If a procedure has stood the test of time and is a good procedure, it will be written about in the medical literature. As such, any physician will have access to how the procedure is performed and the procedure could be performed by more than a few surgeons. When

*Fact*

Pubmed is a service of the U.S.  
National Library of Medicine

you hear about a new procedure, visit <http://www.pubmed.org> and search for the procedure. At times the procedure will be listed under another generic name but pubmed should be able to find the procedure. Generally abstracts are available for free and you can purchase access to the entire scientific article. Procedures which produce good results will have peer reviewed scientific studies which bear out the results.

## Free Consultations

Free consultations can be an excellent way to become acquainted with a physician's practice but they can also be a good way to get a high powered sales pitch. In some practices the physician will perform the consultation directly. In these cases, it can be a very informative session



---

and often worth much more than it costs.

In other situations, patients may be evaluated solely by a ‘consultant.’ These consultants are often untrained personnel whose job it is to turn prospects into patients. In some situations these consultants are paid commissions based on the number of patients who undergo procedures. At times, patients may not be able to even see the physician until a deposit is paid and they agree to undergo surgery. In these situations, patients may not be the best candidates for the procedures for which they sign up.

In other contexts, there is a mix of a visit with a consultant and the physician. Consultants can be very helpful in educating patients about procedures and the practice flow of a physician’s office. In the end, there is no substitute for a trained and experienced physician who can evaluate a patient and determine if they are an appropriate candidate for the procedure they are wishing to undergo.

Cosmetic surgery is costly. Facial fillers cost several hundred dollars and larger surgical procedures cost several thousand. If you are serious about spending these large sums of money, paying \$100-\$200 for an extended visit with a physician should not be a primary concern.

### **Voted Best**

Most ‘Voted Best’ physicians are very reputable. Unfortunately, the criteria for being ‘voted best’ is not always clear and can at times be misleading. When considering a ‘voted best’ physician, determine the criteria for voting and who bestowed the ranking. Was the voting done by a verified ballot or was it anonymous? Anonymous voting can lead to ballot stuffing by certain individuals. Was there a verification of the physician’s credentials as part of the balloting? Some physicians may be voted ‘best’ but not have the training to perform the procedures they are being voted for. Were ballots mailed out or did it rely on people sending in votes? If ballots were mailed out, a more representative sample of results is available. If voting relied on people sending in votes, voting campaigns can be undertaken to sway the balloting. Does publication of names rely on purchasing of advertising? Some ‘voted best’ publications rely on the person being voted to buy advertising. For a reliable list, advertising should not be required.

Just because a physician is not in a ‘best of’ list does not mean they are not a good physician. Many excellent physicians are never ‘voted best’.

### **The Latest Technology**

Just because something is the latest, doesn’t mean it is the greatest. Many technologies that have promising starts end up being removed from the market or improved after extended follow up because of unexpected long term results. In addition, companies which are new to a market may not last the test of time. One example of this is Artefill®. Artefill® was approved as a permanent facial filler in October of 2006. Unfortunately in November 2008, the manufacturer of Artefill®, Artes Medical filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy.

This does not mean that the latest technology is a bad thing. For some things, the latest technology brings a fresh alternative with excellent results. At some point, all procedures were new. Waiting a year or two to determine long term results is never a bad idea before undertaking a new procedure.

Sometimes the old way is the best way. Consider a physician who performs both classic procedures and has access and knowledge of the latest technology. Patients will often get the best results from physicians who are able to take the best of the old and combine it with the latest techniques.

### **Awards**

Physicians will often report on awards they have received from companies, report that they are on teaching faculty for certain companies, or they have received special training with certain certifications. While these can be well deserved and reflect outstanding performance, some are given for less ideal reasons. Some awards with fancy names are given by companies simply for purchasing a certain amount of product or attending a company sponsored training seminar. These awards do not reflect the ability of the physician to perform a procedure but rather reflect their willingness to invest in a certain product or procedure. If you see one of these rewards, be sure to ask the physician what it takes to

receive the reward. Just because a physician buys X amount of product, doesn't mean that they can use that same product well and get the results that you expect.

Teaching faculty for companies are selected by the companies not necessarily based on the most competent physician available. These physicians are often compensated by the company for their time and receive travel compensation for special training sessions. While teaching faculty can be very good at what they do, it is not necessarily their competence which has gotten them to their position. At times, these faculty have come to the attention of the company for the amount of product which they are purchasing and not necessarily their ability to use the product correctly.

Some physicians will advertise that they have special training and special 'certifications.' While some of these certifications are issued by competent authorities, some are issued as a result of paying a fee or taking an online or weekend course. They do not necessarily reflect the competence of the physician or that the physician's ability to perform a procedure well has been tested. Finding a physician who is board certified and has received extensive training in a certain procedure is necessary to ensure that you get the best results possible. For a full discussion of board certification, please read the section on Choosing Your Physician.

### **Over 1,000 Performed**

Determining how many of a procedure a physician has performed is always a good idea. For some things, more is better. For others, more is not necessarily better. Just because a physician has performed 10,000 procedures in a year, doesn't mean that he is the best at it or that he will get the results that you desire.

For certain procedures, such as lasik surgery, performing thousands of procedures can be a plus. There are very well defined guidelines to determine who is a candidate for that particular type of surgery. A physician can specialize in lasik surgery knowing there is a black and white line to determine if it is the right procedure for a patient without exploring any other options. Unfortunately, in facial rejuvenation there are not well defined guidelines to determine which procedure works best

for every patient. Though a physician may have a very busy practice and get excellent results, because of the wide array of available procedures, he may not perform a significant number of any one procedure. By having a wide array of procedures available though, the physician can better offer the best procedure to get the desired results for the patient. On the other hand, if a physician only performs one or two procedures, everyone who comes into the office will be offered only those one or two procedures. The physician will perform an impressive number of procedures but the patient may not always obtain the best results.

Temper the number of procedures a physician has performed with his revision rate. Ask the physician how many times a revision is necessary or patients report problems after surgery. Though this is a hard number to substantiate, most physicians will be rather forthcoming. Revision rates for some procedures up to 10-15% are not unreasonable. If the physician though reports a very low revision rate, be wary. Even the best physicians with excellent technical skills encounter abnormal healing.

Be careful too of the large corporations which extoll having performed thousands of procedures. Facial rejuvenation procedures aren't like Big Macs®, one isn't like the next. Each must be individualized and the results are partly based on the skill of the surgeon performing the procedure. Though there may have been thousands performed by the corporation, each physician may not have performed thousands.

### **Special Pricing**

While special pricing can provide excellent value for patients, be ware of specials which exist only for a day or packages which require you to pay for an entire series of treatments in advance to get the best price. When considering facial rejuvenation procedures, the best price may not create the best result. In some situations, the best price may turn into a much more costly experience if revision procedures are necessary because the original procedure was performed by a provider who was less than qualified.

Be sure to read the fine print. Sometimes package pricing or high pressure sales can require putting down a large sum of money which is nonrefundable even if you decide to only perform one or two procedures or none at all. Be especially careful if you have to finance the procedures.

---

Be sure to read all of the fine print in the financing documents before deciding to proceed. Even if you can get back the money for your deposit, you may still owe interest and penalties to the financing company.