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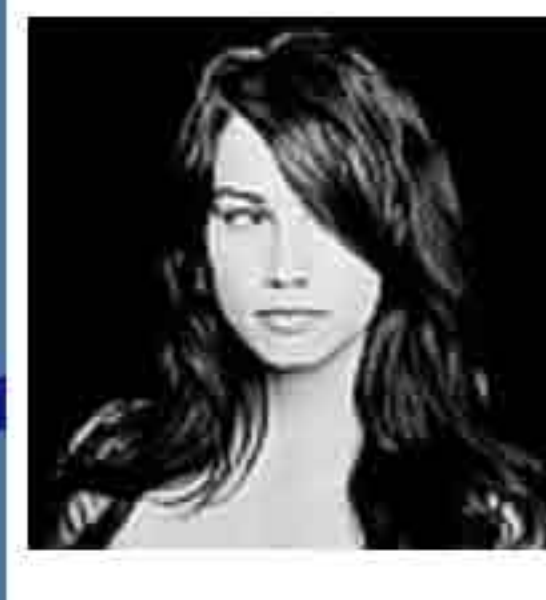
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Nip Tuck: The Untold Truth About Plastic Surgery by Susan Marley

Robert Smith and Associates
February 28, 2007



In today's culture plastic surgeons have become the new 'rock stars'. Television has created a glamorous industry

Robert Smith and Associates

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and cosmetic procedures have increased over the last few years.

Yet, the cosmetic surgery profession is not without its challenges.

"My biggest challenges comes in facing the power exerted by the large "chains" of hair transplant clinics, namely Bosley and Medical Hair Restoration. The internet has significantly leveled the playing field, but these mega-practices exert significant control of the market and are a constant competitor. Furthermore, their fees have progressively gone down over the past few years, thus exerting some downward pressure on my surgical fees. Of course, I have found ways to successfully deal with these challenges, as my practice has continued to thrive." Jeffrey S. Epstein, MD, FACS Miami and NYC [www.foundhair.com](#)

According to leading plastic surgeon Steve Laverson the biggest challenge facing plastic surgeons in America today is the erosion of third party payment for Reconstructive Surgical procedures. Cosmetic surgery techniques, and the entire subspecialty of cosmetic surgery, grew as a branch from our Reconstructive Surgical Heritage. Reconstructive Surgery is the repair and restoration of form and/or function after injury, birth defect, cancer removal, or other disease. Because these procedures involve primarily quality of life, third party payors, in an effort to cut costs and maximize profits, now call many of these procedures (breast reconstruction after mastectomy, cleft palate/lip reconstruction, and others) cosmetic procedures, and refuse to pay for them. When reconstructive procedures are covered, the payment level is so low, that plastic surgeons avoid these patients and procedures- so reconstructive surgery is rapidly becoming a lost art. Surgeons in training today do not want to learn reconstructive surgical techniques because they cannot earn a living taking care of these patients. Additional challenges facing all plastic surgeons are maintaining expertise, avoiding surgical complications, producing excellent results consistently for every patient, and maintaining a profitable practice. His website is [www.feelbeautiful.com](#).

The cosmetic surgery industry has seen a surge in the number of products, devices and services marketed to the public. One of the greatest challenges we face as competent, ethical physicians is to stay focused on our patients and to separate the true breakthroughs from the snake oil. Another significant challenge we face as plastic surgeons is to try to manage our patients' expectations with respect to the results that can be achieved. Many of the reality TV programs give patients a skewed view of plastic surgery. Jorge A. Perez, M.D., F.A.C.S. [www.PerezPlasticSurgery.com](#)

The three biggest challenges facing **Dr. Stuart Linder** of [www.drlinder.com](#) and author of the upcoming book *The Beverly Hills Shape, The Truth About Plastic Surgery* are:

Challenge 1: Patient Selection/Education and Realistic Expectations- Plastic surgery, especially here in Beverly Hills and Hollywood is more than just surgery, it is also psychotherapy. Understanding the patient before surgery is absolutely essential with respect to the final result and the overall outcome of the patient's happiness. The patient must have realistic expectations and therefore several consultation appointments are usually required, at least two, prior to the surgery so that Dr. Linder may evaluate the patient's mental reasoning and desire for the specific body sculpting procedures.

Challenge No. 2: Scheduling- Scheduling can very often be difficult because Los Angeles is a worldwide Mecca for cosmetic and plastic surgery procedures. The patients who present in consultation often want surgery as soon as possible. However, we are unable to perform their surgeries for several months because we are often booked up for months in advance which leave little room for having immediate surgery unless there is a cancellation. We make every attempt to schedule patients for the earliest available date possible, however, summer months are so booked up that it is also very difficult to accommodate patients for immediate surgery unless we open up on a day during the weekend.

Challenge No. 3: Staffing and Suppliers- The staff for the surgery is absolutely vital. The components include a Board Certified Anesthesiologist, the Director of Nursing, the ancillary help, including the Circulating Nurse and the Certified Scrub Tech. All of

these people are absolutely essential for each and every successful surgery because staffing will have emergencies and/or vacations.

Dr. Russell B. Stokes, Diplomat of ABPS adds," There are several challenges facing cosmetic (or aesthetic, as we prefer to call it) surgeons currently. Competition from poorly trained physicians who are leaving other specialties is a significant problem.

Many physicians have seen their incomes dwindle as insurance reimbursements have decreased over the years. They see cosmetic surgery as a quick, easy source of revenue, and often have little or no training in the techniques they begin to use. Another

significant source of concern is frivolous lawsuits."

" I have been a plastic surgeon since 1981 and have seen many changes. While public acceptance of aesthetic surgery and the number of people desiring such procedures has increased enormously, the number of physicians doing aesthetic surgery has more than kept pace. This increase in competition has not hurt us with well established reputations but it is much more difficult for the younger docs to get going. The number of litigious patients has increased and that affects all of medicine equally," said Dr. Juris Bunkis, Orange County Plastic Surgery [www.ocps.com](#)

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1. The never-ending search for less invasive yet equally effective treatments.
2. Keeping current with the myriad of new technologies claiming to meet the description of #1 above.
3. Educating the public to be better consumers. This is really critical as there are only approximately 7000 board certified plastic surgeons in the U.S and over 70,000 practitioners providing cosmetic services. Though the tenet "caveat emptor" applies, it behooves plastic surgeons to help these "emptors" become better more knowledgeable consumers and hopefully find their way to the highest quality care.
4. Finally I think it is a constant challenge to continually provide the highest level of care. I personally treat all patients as if they were family and I take my work very personally.

Dr. Christine Keusch opened the doors of the Boca Raton Plastic Surgery Center 17 years ago. She says," Over the past 17 years there have been many changes in the field of plastic surgery and aesthetics - many advances for the better, and some not so positive. With a literal explosion in the beauty business, there are a myriad of choices out there for the consumer. One of our greatest challenges in the industry today is to help the consumer educate themselves about qualified, bona fide professionals and the procedures they are - or are not - qualified to carry out. First and foremost, be sure your doctor is a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon. Go to [www.plasticsurgery.org](#) to verify. Always check credentials and references before you agree to have any procedure done.

Interview your doctor. The doctor/patient relationship is one of the most important factors when choosing your surgeon. Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you are not comfortable with the answers you are getting, seek other opinions before making a decision. Ask for referrals. Speaking to several other patients that have been through the procedure you are considering can help you determine if you are ready for the procedure and if the doctor is right for you. Read and research. When it comes to plastic surgery, the Internet can sometimes be a double-edged sword. Make sure the information you read and research is coming from a reliable source. While the plastic surgery industry has grown tremendously, and there may be non-qualified practitioners out there taking advantage of the uneducated consumer, there are ways you can protect yourself. Rest assured, there are also many qualified, seasoned professionals that are more experienced and skilled than ever before."

Dr. Paul Albear of [www.albearplasticsurgery.com](#) says," Two key concerns to a young plastic surgeon are trying to help the uninsured that walk in the office which seems to be growing in numbers . I find myself giving supplies away to get the appropriate care accomplished. The other issue is the cost of malpractice and unrealistic expectations created by TV shows. The malpractice environment in Florida has definitely had an impact on recruitment to the area."

Newport Beach surgeon Dr. Michael Elam answers, " The biggest challenge facing Plastic Surgeons today is too much misinformation. Patients are often under the impression that fillers, or mini surgeries, or the so- called" Lunch Time Lift", will suffice when more traditional procedures are needed. Plastic Surgery has evolved but in many cases there is no substitute for the traditional time tested approach." For more information about Dr. Elam, please visit [www.michaelerammd.com](#)

" There are two major challenges facing facial plastic and cosmetic surgeons today. The first is economic and the second is medical integrity. The economic challenge is one of competition not only from our board certified peers but also from the general medical community as well. With decreasing reimbursement from the insurance companies and the limitation of the federal government in raising our fees to cover the increased cost of doing business the average physician is losing money and taking home less. The other economic hiccup that needs to be mentioned is the rising cost of malpractice insurance that the Federal government refuses to address. The other challenge facing cosmetic and facial plastic surgeons is what I refer to as " medical integrity." Dr. Doug Dedo Gardens Cosmetic Center 561-626-FACE

Dr. Hootan Daneshmand says," 1) Patient expectations as seen on TV programs are sometimes unrealistic. 2) Popularity of unproven techniques and procedures done by non-qualified surgeons and physicians who are not even surgeons. 3) Less time and effort given to reconstructive procedures due to low reimbursement.

4) Patient being given different and differing information via the web.

Dr. Daneshmand specializes in cosmetic plastic surgery and breast reconstruction and is an active member of the Breast Care Center in South Orange County. He is on staff at multiple hospitals including Hoag Presbyterian Hospital, Irvine Regional Hospital, Saddleback Memorial Hospital, and Coastal Communities Hospital. His website is [www.ocplasticsurgeons.com](#)

The biggest challenge facing Dr. Linda Li of Beverly Hills is:

Helping patients realize what is realistically achievable and what can not be accomplished. Her website is [www.lindalimd.com](#).

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