



# HOLLYWOOD

**DRIVES CONSUMER INTEREST  
IN AESTHETIC PROCEDURES**



By James Tager, Contributing Editor

**T**o some, it may look like just another street, complete with restaurants, nail salons and office buildings. This perception fades away the moment you spot the paparazzi, sometimes dozens of them, impatiently waiting for a glimpse of celebrity. The majority of the camera lenses are focused on the front doors of several cosmetic surgery practices. As plastic surgeon **Stuart Linder, M.D., F.A.C.S.**, explained, "There have been instances where the paparazzi hang around our front door every day. I've seen 25 paparazzi at a time."

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"There was a time when this street wasn't even on the radar screen," acknowledged Frank Ryan, M.D., F.A.C.S., a plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills, Calif. "Now, there's so many paparazzi, you don't even look twice. This has become a media hotspot." This media hotspot goes by another name: Bedford Drive. Placed squarely in the middle of Beverly Hills, Bedford Drive is more than just a street. It is an epicenter of the relationship between Hollywood and aesthetics.



**Stuart Linder, M.D., F.A.C.S.**  
Plastic Surgeon  
Beverly Hills, CA



**Frank Ryan, M.D., F.A.C.S.**  
Plastic Surgeon  
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This relationship has many partners; the media, celebrities, aesthetic practitioners and fans. The patient who comes in asking for Angelina Jolie's lips is playing her part. So is the aging action hero who wants to stay in the movie business, as well as the up-and-coming starlet who is looking to boost her career. Media moguls who sell celebrity magazines are part of this relationship, as are the basement bloggers declaring who's had work done and who hasn't. Increasingly, plastic surgeons and other aesthetic practitioners are playing an active part in this equation. Some step into the limelight, hosting reality shows and commenting on new procedures; others are dragged unwillingly into the spotlight, defending the profession against tabloid-fueled controversy.

The Hollywood/aesthetic bond is gaining in both strength and complexity, and it is one that all aesthetic practitioners need to be aware of. "Consumers look to Hollywood for beauty," explained Richard Fleming, M.D., F.A.C.S., a plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills. "Someone will look at a movie poster, a spot for a television show or a music video and say, 'That is beauty.' To say that Hollywood doesn't influence what people consider appropriate or desirable in terms of beauty is to be totally mistaken." Dr. Fleming added, "We don't operate in a vacuum; we have to pay attention to the world around us. For a surgeon not to pay attention to what celebrities are doing aesthetically, and how they influence consumer trends strikes me as pretty naïve."



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With the effect that celebrities have on the aesthetic profession, a deeper look at the many facets of this complicated and powerful connection may benefit aesthetic practitioners nationwide. Of course, any exploration of the celebrity-aesthetic relationship can only start in one, glamorous place – Hollywood.

"Celebrities are the gold standard of beauty," noted Dr. Fleming. For years Dr. Fleming and his partner, Toby Mayer, M.D., of the Beverly Hills Institute of Aesthetic and Reconstructive Surgery, have compiled a list of "Hollywood's Hottest

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According to Dr. Ryan, that myth spells trouble for those who freely admit they've had surgery. "The make-over shows don't talk about the length of the surgery. They don't focus on how many procedures it took to obtain a spectacular result. For Heidi, not hiding a single thing was a controversial move. I was shocked at the worldwide response. Before the operation, she asked if I was prepared for the media frenzy that would ensue. I assumed she was exaggerating."

They weren't. The media attention was powerful and sustained. Every blogger and celebrity-focused website rushed to add their two cents on Ms. Montag's sudden transformation, making the term "media frenzy" an apt one.

For Dr. Ryan, there were several take-away lessons on how an aesthetic professional should deal with the media. One of his biggest lessons is this: When in front of the camera or the microphone, there is no such thing as an off-hand remark. "Two weeks ago I was at an event where a reporter asked me if I would do more work on Heidi. I replied that I thought she looked perfect, and that she didn't need anything else, so why consider more surgery? They took that quote and ran the headline, *Heidi Montag's Doctor: I Won't Operate on Her Anymore!* Now when interviewed, I give boring answers to every question, just to make sure I don't pop up on *TMZ* again."

Dr. Linder had his own experience with the media; as a successful surgeon, he has received his share of requests to appear on television shows. "The important thing," he stressed, "is that any cosmetic show remain focused on the patient. I've had offers to appear in shows that don't have anything to do with plastic surgery. They just want to shoot me driving around Beverly Hills. It's not appropriate, and would do nothing to promote my practice as a plastic surgeon."

Dr. Linder's advice is to only accept media appearances that showcase you as a professional, not a personality. "There's nothing wrong with entertainment, but it needs to show the patient's life. If I'm on a reality show, it needs to show me in the operating room."

Dr. Linder also cautioned against seeing media appearances as the ticket to new patients. "In general, when you do a quick media segment, it doesn't bring hundreds of patients. Your practice will not suddenly become inundated with phone calls. As always, a successful practice is built on a legacy of quality surgeries and good word-of-mouth." He listed his two guiding motivations for appearing in a media interview: "Firstly, as professionals we want to educate and safeguard the public. Secondly, media appearances allow you to maintain credibility and enhance recognition of who you are and what you do." In his experience these concepts will stand you in good stead, whether you're appearing on *Entertainment Tonight* or the local news channel.

In looking forward, there are some ways that the effect Hollywood or celebrities have on the aesthetic field is declining. "From the fifties to the eighties many

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people underwent plastic surgery in order to differentiate themselves, to stand out," Dr. Dayan observed. "The pendulum has been swinging back to being an option for more people. Take BOTOX as an example; it's comparatively less expensive and widely available. Cosmetic surgery is no longer a tool of separation."

Dr. Pitts-Taylor agreed that, on some level, there has been a "democratization" of cosmetic surgery, "driven by direct-to-consumer advertising, growth in the number and type of practitioners performing cosmetic surgery, lowering of costs, the development of new cosmetic surgery technologies, and the use of outpatient, ambulatory clinics for cosmetic surgeries that once had to be done in a hospital." As cosmetic surgery becomes more widely available, it becomes seen less as a unique tool for the rich and famous and more as a set of procedures from which anyone can benefit, a development that is unquestionably beneficial for the field.

Hollywood's effect on our notions of beauty, and correspondingly on our perceptions of aesthetic treatments, will never go away. "Beverly Hills is seen as the mecca for beauty," declared Dr. Linder. "It's never changed, and it probably never will. Hollywood hasn't changed in a hundred years."

As celebrity culture remains the same, so should the aesthetic field's response to the pervasive effects. Practitioners who use their media appearances to educate the public will never fall victim to their own hype. Practitioners who exude professionalism are best able to deflect media controversy. Moreover, an exhaustive consultation which gets to the root of patient expectations is the best defense against a disgruntled post-op patient, celebrity or otherwise. These bedrocks of building a good practice do not become irrelevant when placed in the glare of the spotlight; on the contrary, they become all the more imperative.

After all, as Hollywood shows no signs of slowing down, either does the aesthetic industry. "Ten years ago, we first wrote about the growth of plastic surgery," recalled Dr. Sarwer, reflecting on his opinions and those of his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania. "At the time, the numbers were a fraction of what they are today. None of us anticipated that it would become as popular as it is now. There's nothing on the horizon that suggests a slow down, either." So even though the stars of Hollywood capture the attention of millions of people, they're not the only ones able to redefine how we, as a culture, approach beauty. ■