

Cosmetic Procedures: *Who-Where-When-How*



By Don J. Fontana, MD, PA

There has been a recent increase in awareness of cosmetic surgery and procedures whether due to the transformation of Caitlin or the TV program “Botched.” Cosmetic procedures have become so popular that dentists, physicians of all types, and nurses are offering certain cosmetic treatments including Botox, fillers, liposuction, laser, treatment of spider veins, and tattoo removal in an attempt to cash in on these procedures.

In our free market society, the competition among different service vendors is a good thing, except when a patient’s well-being and health is involved. Those physicians and nurses not trained in plastic surgery or dermatology would argue that they have taken the instructional courses to qualify to administer such treatments as Botox and facial fillers. The dentists and oral surgeons state that they are very knowledgeable of facial anatomy and since

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the procedures are so simple, why not offer these services.

The problem with those professing these positions is that they have just enough knowledge to possibly endanger an unsuspecting patient. Deciding who is best qualified to administer a treatment is a personal decision.

Most cosmetic injectible procedures are routinely performed in a physician’s office under antiseptic conditions. These same procedures are offered and done in hair salons, medispas, fitness centers and residential homes under the label of “Botox/filler parties.” According to the State of Maryland law, injectibles can be administered by non-physicians (registered nurses) only under the direct supervision of a physician present at the particular facility.

When should a prospective patient consider having one of these procedures done? The answer is only when it is appropriate. The person administering the treatment must review the patient’s medical history and determine whether it is medically appropriate and when there are aesthetic indications for treatment.

Once the patient is counseled, a patient-physician relationship is established giving

the patient the right to pursue any legal claim against the treating individual. The standards of care are the same whether the treatment is given by a plastic surgeon, dermatologist or nurse.

All of the injectible treatments are very technique dependent. How the injection is done can make the difference between an excellent result and a disaster which could last six months. Knowledge of facial anatomy, facial balance and volume and the dynamics of facial animation all contribute to an excellent end result.

Injecting Botox incorrectly can result in a sagging eyebrow, lip or drooping eyelid. There is no corrective treatment other than allowing the Botox to dissipate over the next 3-4 months.

Facial filler not placed within the correct layer of skin or subcutaneous tissue, can result in distortion and lumpiness of the treated area and may require months to be absorbed.

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Creases and wrinkles are often diminished or completely removed albeit temporary. The results of properly injected facial fillers are immediate and the folds about the nose and mouth are markedly improved or eliminated.

Before considering either of these cosmetic treatments, check the qualification of the health professional providing this service.