

# Sculpting expertise: shaping the future of aesthetic surgery training and specialty regulations

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## To the editor,

The rise of social media and targeted advertising has ushered in a new era of aesthetic surgery, characterized by a balance between demand, training, and patient desire for customized enhancement and rejuvenation. This demand converges with the intersection of surgical innovation and practical skill, as aesthetic surgeons aim to meet the evolving expectations of a discerning clientele (1). To become a competent and safe aesthetic surgeon, a comprehensive medical education must be complemented by specialized training in plastic surgery. Moreover, an unwavering dedication to continuous professional development is essential to stay abreast of contemporary techniques and advancements in aesthetic surgery. This paper aims to critically examine the ethical landscape of aesthetic surgery while navigating the intricate relationship between surgical innovation, practical skills, and escalating patient expectations shaped by social media. By addressing the inconsistencies and shortcomings in certifications and ethical considerations, this letter proposes a reassessment of regulatory frameworks to enhance patient safety and practitioner credibility in the rapidly evolving field of cosmetic surgery.

An important issue in the field is the prevalence of plastic surgeons performing aesthetic procedures without the necessary certifications or adequate experience. This is often attributed to financial incentives rather than a commitment to providing the highest standard of patient care. This raises the question of whether aesthetic surgery is primarily a commercial enterprise driven by market forces and oriented

towards material gain, or if it is an altruistic endeavor designed to benefit patients and is an integral part of the healthcare system (2).

The lack of stringent regulatory measures in cosmetic surgery marketing, coupled with patients' misunderstandings about the differences between plastic and cosmetic surgeons, undermines the transparency necessary for informed selection of a qualified and skilled surgeon. This transparency is crucial for the safe enhancement of physical and mental health (3).

A comprehensive study conducted in the United States assessed the varying levels of confidence among residents in aesthetic surgical procedures. The findings revealed that although residents demonstrated greater confidence in procedures such as abdominoplasty, breast reduction, and augmentation-mammoplasty, they lacked competence in facial aesthetic interventions, particularly rhinoplasty and facelift. There is a consensus among both residents and program directors of plastic surgery residencies regarding the need for enhanced training, particularly in facial procedures (4). The observed discrepancies in residents' confidence and competence emphasize the critical need for targeted training enhancements, especially in facial aesthetic interventions. This finding underscores the importance of examining cosmetic surgery certifications and their potential implications for patient awareness and understanding (4,5).

In the United States, certification in cosmetic surgery is granted by the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery (ABCS) upon completing specific tasks. However, it is noteworthy that individuals certified by the ABCS include internists and dermatologists, whose

services are promoted as board-certified cosmetic surgeons. This dynamic creates a paradox, as many ABCS members perform intricate aesthetic procedures beyond the scope of their initial residency training. Consequently, patients who rely solely on ABCS certification may lack a comprehensive understanding of their training background and qualifications (5).

The glaring lack of rigorous regulations and certifications in aesthetic surgery presents a significant obstacle to ensuring patient safety and maintaining high standards within the profession. It is of utmost importance to address this issue by conducting a thorough examination of existing regulatory frameworks, with a particular focus on creating standardized certifications that capture the ever-evolving landscape of aesthetic procedures. A scientific investigation into the efficacy of current regulations, comparative analyses of certification processes in related medical specialties, and collaborative efforts between medical societies and regulatory authorities could facilitate the development of a unified and scientifically-based certification system. Such an initiative is crucial for safeguarding patient well-being and enhancing practitioners' credibility and professionalism in the continuously advancing field of aesthetic surgery.

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