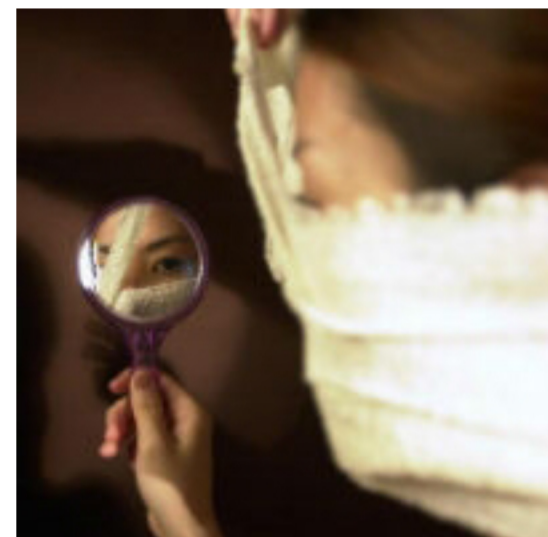


You can't have surgery to look like a celeb in Singapore!

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Here's why some plastic surgeons have no choice but to turn away customers with unrealistic demands



Plastic surgeons here have had to turn away some patients because of their unrealistic demands. Image: ST File

Plastic surgeons here have had to turn away some patients because of their unrealistic demands.

Some want to undergo surgery to look like certain celebrities. Others are just not satisfied with their looks.

For these rare few, counselling might be more beneficial than surgery, say surgeons interviewed.

Dr Wong Chin Ho, 40, who runs a private clinic and has about 10 years' experience, once encountered an Asian woman in her 50s who was not satisfied with her nose even after undergoing 15 operations.

She apparently started having nose jobs in her 20s and constantly wanted a "prettier" nose.

By the time she went to Dr Wong - seeking a 16th operation - her nose had collapsed.

He says that too many operations done on a certain part of the body can cause the tissue there to die.

"Eventually, the feature can break down and look sunken in," he adds. "I told her I could not operate on her without transplanting tissue from her forehead and she was not agreeable to this."

Another patient, a plain-looking woman in her early 20s, wanted to have the face of Lin Chiling to please her boyfriend, who liked the look of the Taiwanese model-actress.

Dr Wong adds: "I told her it was impossible because she had a different skeletal structure from the actress."

Thankfully, most patients are content with improving what nature has given them.

Surgeons say they generally try to achieve a supple, natural look which makes the patient still recognisable.

Dr Chua Jun Jin, 49, who has 15 years' experience, says: "If you want so much surgery, you'll no longer be you. You will become another person."

Once, he encountered an Asian man in his 20s who wanted a cleft chin. "The feature may look good on a Caucasian, but it didn't fit in with the rest of his face.

"So I asked him to consult 10 friends about whether the surgery was a good idea. Thankfully, he didn't return."

Dr Leo Kah Woon, 40, has encountered patients who have undergone more than six procedures on their eyelids and still complain that one eyelid is smaller or higher than the other.

He says: "The warning bells go off if patients cannot pin down exactly what they want and just say they are unhappy with a certain feature.

"I tell them if they cannot be specific, I cannot deliver what they want."

Dr Andrew Khoo, 52, says he warns those who have had multiple operations of the greater risk of developing complications or of not healing well.

"Each operation causes a certain amount of injury and scarring. If multiple surgeries are done in quick succession, the area is too scarred and there may be healing problems due to poor blood supply."

Some patients, surgeons say, suffer from body dysmorphic disorder, a mental illness in which the person cannot stop thinking about a perceived flaw in his appearance and goes to great lengths to rectify it.

Those with such a condition can become depressed and withdrawn, says Dr Adrian Wang, 48, a psychiatrist at Gleneagles Medical Centre.

They might avoid social interaction - believing that other people would be watching and judging them - and some might not even be able to hold down a job.

Treatment, he says, usually consists of counselling and - if the patient is feeling depressed or anxious - medication.

But not all patients who go for plastic surgery frequently suffer from such a condition, he adds.

"Some of them may just be very vain, highly insecure or simply have a lot of money to spend."