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'Dr. 90210' star sees job changing

Plastic surgery isn't just for rich

By Tom Corwin

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Cosmetic surgery is becoming more mainstream and accessible to the middle class, who find it can provide important psychological benefits in addition to the physical, a celebrity plastic surgeon said.



Timothy Rausch/Staff

Dr. Jason Diamond, a plastic surgeon who appears on the TV show Dr. 90210, shows facial rejuvenation techniques during a seminar at the Medical College of Georgia.

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Jason B. Diamond, one of the stars of the reality series Dr. 90210, is among the featured speakers at a conference this weekend in Augusta on the latest trends in facial plastic surgery, sponsored by the Medical College of Georgia.

Since 1997, the number of cosmetic surgery procedures has increased 457 percent, led by an increase in nonsurgical procedures such as Botox injections, which have shot up 754 percent, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. Those kinds of procedures are also attracting younger patients, said Achih Chen, the director of the facial plastic surgery program in the Department of Otolaryngology at MCG, who trained with Dr. Diamond at a clinic in Beverly Hills, Calif.

"They like the way they look right now and they're trying to hold off the inevitable, I guess," Dr. Chen said with a laugh.

Dr. Diamond said he sees patients as young as 25 who are bikini models and want to help clear up damage from constantly working in the sun.

"It's preventative," he said. They do it "for the job."

But other people are doing it as well, Dr. Chen said.

"It's become more of a middle-class type of thing," he said.

Many of those younger patients are interested in Botox or the "filler" treatments, where the surgeons use injectable materials to fill out an area to lessen the look of lines or wrinkles, Dr. Chen said. He likens the face to a grape -- when full, the skin is smooth and round, but aging takes out volume that causes sagging and unpleasant lining. Patients get really excited when they learn they can have fat removed to help fill in those areas, Dr. Chen said.

"They love that. It's like their ultimate dream," he said. "But really the amount of fat that you're removing to fill the face is not enough to change the contour of the donor site."

These days the job is all about "facial rejuvenation," Dr. Diamond said. And that can go beyond a more youthful appearance. "It does something internally that creates a youthful personality as well," he said. "It's quite an amazing thing. They act with more vigor, more youth, more confidence. And that can be just as impressive or more impressive than the actual physical change."

Baby boomers, who are likely to be healthier than previous generations, will probably be more interested in that, Dr. Chen said.

"In many ways, they want to look the part," he said. "If you're healthy, you want to look healthy." Cindy Wolfe, 45, got a free procedure from Dr. Diamond as he demonstrated how to inject the filler Juvederm into her nasolabial folds, the lines extending down from the nose on either side of the mouth. Those lines tend to become more defined as you age, and the filler helps to conceal them, she said.

For Ms. Wolfe, the procedure is a way of looking better before she feels she needs anything more drastic done.

"We're trying to prevent the knife, at this point," she said with a laugh. "But that's next. I haven't ruled it out."

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