

# Surgery: All reconstruction options should be weighed thoroughly

at their facility. Ask about any complications encountered with past patients and why. Ask if the surgery will be performed in an outpatient setting, if so, does the facility have an agreement with a hospital to transport patients in case of an emergency? Both of the surgeons I interviewed had agreements with a local hospital. A reputable facility will ensure that they can transport patients to a hospital setting in case of any complications that they may not be equipped to handle.

Fifty-two percent of all cosmetic procedures were performed in an outpatient facility last year. Surgeons use office-based facilities because it's much more cost-effective as opposed to a hospital setting. There is no increase of complications for surgeries performed in an office based facility unless the procedure requires hospitalization. Some medical professionals believe the risk may be less because there is less risk of infections in an office-based facility.

High-volume liposuction (over 5 liters of aspirate of total fat and fluids) should only be performed in a hospital setting because the procedure requires an overnight stay. Most of the complications we see on sensational television or read about are those that practice higher risk procedures in an office-based facility that does not have access to a hospital. When it comes to surgery, there are no shortcuts. There are risks and complications that can occur. Practice the old adage, if it sounds too good to be true, it is too good to be true.

Check your surgeon's credentials and ask questions. There are numerous Web sites that can give you information about your surgeon's background. You should be able to ask your surgeon and his/her staff any questions about their practice, procedures and background. No question is too trivial and should not be considered as such by your surgeon. You and only you, will be living with the results. If your surgeon is vague or will not answer your questions, walk away. A rushed consultation is not a good sign. As one of the surgeons interviewed stated, "If you don't feel good about the surgeon, staff and the whole experience, don't have plastic surgery."

Ask how much your surgery will cost. Make sure that the stated fee includes everything: the consultation, surgeon's fee, anesthesia, supplies, medication, hospitalization (if needed), compression garments that may be required post op and any blood work you may require. Get an accurate assessment of how long the procedure will take, and what the pre-op and post-op requirements are for your surgery. How long will you have to be out of work? What is the recovery period? How much bruising and swelling can you expect? Be honest with your surgeon about your medical history and background. He or she can only determine from the information you give if you are a good candidate for surgery.

Most importantly, you should feel comfortable with your surgeon and the staff. If you aren't, find another sur-

geon. One of the women I interviewed changed her mind the day before surgery with the first surgeon she chose because she said, "I knew he was a very competent, reputable surgeon, but it just didn't feel right." Go with your instincts. They're right 99.9% of the time.

## Costs and ways to pay

Presently, insurance does not cover cosmetic surgery. The only exception is reconstructive breast surgery for health reasons (cancer of the breast), and, possibly, what may be considered a deformity such as one breast noticeably larger than the other. Breast reduction may be covered if it poses health problems. Ask your surgeon to check with your insurance plan to determine if any of your procedures may be covered. If your procedure can be shown to improve your health in some capacity, your insurer may reimburse you for your costs.

Procedures are expensive. Breast augmentation can range anywhere from \$3,000 to \$4,500. Breast lifts can set you back as much as \$6000. Liposuction will cost you \$4000 plus depending on how much liposuction is done and that's mainly just for surgeon's fees. A facelift, eyelid surgery and forehead lift will range anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Tummy tucks can cost as much as \$7,000. Costs are dependent upon the number of procedures being done, hospitalization costs (if any), and

the surgeon's fees for his services. You can do a Google search online for plastic surgery fees and you'll find about a million or so options and ways to pay for plastic surgery. You'll want to stick with the most reputable companies for financing. They're usually the ones on the first page of your search! Citi Financial allows you to apply for a personal loan for plastic surgery online. Your surgeon's office may have information about plastic surgery loans that charge an interest rate depending on your credit history to pay for your surgery over a period of time. Some surgeons even offer financing of their own.

Another option is to put money away each month. One of the women interviewed did just that. "About a year and a half before my surgery, I put away money each month that was about the same or a little more than my car payment. I figured I was worth more than a car," she said. Charge your surgery on a free and clear credit card you have or charge half and pay for the remaining fees.

## A Personal Thank You

I hope that you've enjoyed reading this series of articles as much I've enjoyed writing them. I hope that you've gleaned valuable information to help you make a better informed decision if you're considering plastic surgery. I applaud the women who shared their stories with us, and the surgeons, Drs. Funcik

and Kline who took the time to explain the reasons, the risks, and the benefits of choosing elective surgery. We are fortunate to have these competent doctors in East Cooper with their compassionate bedside manners and impressive backgrounds and experience that enable them to use their talents and gifts.

As for me, I haven't decided to make that final commitment. As the middle-aged woman stares back at me from my mirror, I look for any new lines, wrinkles or sags. I see areas I'd like to improve. I notice a jawline that's not as firm as it once was. For now, I'm okay with that, and every now and then, I still catch a glimpse of the younger woman that used to look back at me. But, just in case, I may set a little money back this month and the next and the next, and well, you get the picture. Maybe, in a couple of years, I'll be making that call. But, that's another story.

(Editor's Note: The views expressed in this article are not necessarily the views of the Moultrie News or the author. This article is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. Anyone who is considering any type of medical procedure or surgery should consult with their surgeon of choice.)

Brigitte Surette is an independent writer in Mount Pleasant. Her e-mail address is [BrigitteSurette@aol.com](mailto:BrigitteSurette@aol.com).

## Creative Retirement sets January schedule

The Center for Creative Retirement has released its program schedule for January.

•Tuesday, Jan. 11 at 1 p.m. - "Does Charleston Have What It Takes to Become a World Heritage Site?" The speaker is John Meffert, Tourism Consultant.

•Tuesday, Jan. 11 at 2:30 p.m. - "Nanny Wood: From Washington Belle to Portland's Grande Dame." The speaker is Phillip W. Leon, Ph.D., Professor English at The Citadel

•Tuesday, January 18 at 1 p.m. - Charleston and the Civil War, Part I: "Charles Whilden: An Unsung Civil War Hero." The speaker is author Gordon C. Rhea.

•Tuesday, January 18 at 2:30 p.m. - "Preserving the Lowcountry for Generations to Come." The speaker is Will Haynie, Executive Director of the Lowcountry Open Land Trust

•Tuesday, January 25 at 1 p.m. - "The Post and Courier in the Community We Serve." The speakers are Susan Sanders, Community Service Director, and Elsa McDowell, Public Editor

•Tuesday, January 25 at 2:30 p.m. "Elderlaw, Estate Planning, Advance Directives and Medicaid."

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**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**Business License Renewal Notice To All Business Located Or Doing Business In The City Of Isle Of Palms**

The City of Isle of Palms business license renewal applications were mailed in December 2004. The business owner will have until January 31, 2005 to submit payment to the Business License Office without penalty. Beginning February 1, 2005, the business owner will be assessed a 5% penalty each month the fee is not paid. Businesses operating without a current Isle of Palms Business License may also be subject criminal prosecution.

Failure to receive a business license renewal application does not relieve you of the responsibility of paying the business license fee.

If you have any questions, please contact the Isle of Palms Business License Office at 886-9912 or come by 1301 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC 29451.

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