



PLASTIC SURGERY: SINGAPORE

Dr. Tan Ying Chien, a cosmetic surgeon with The Sloane Clinic Plastic Surgery Centre, says that about 30 percent of his patients are expatriates and about 15 percent travel all the way to Singapore for aesthetic treatment: "Because of globalisation, I've got patients flying in from Russia, Korea and Mongolia for surgery."

Men: Women Ratio
"In the late nineties, aesthetic surgery was almost an overnight part of plastic surgery and women are expected to have more men patients. Today, that hasn't changed," says Dr. Huang, but adds that men do form a significant market in the industry. Now, this doesn't mean that the ratio (between men and women) would necessarily change – the numbers for both genders have gone up but for men, it has increased more relatively than women's."

LESS USUAL REQUESTS
All that has resulted in plastic surgeons experiencing a range of excursions with both male and female patients.

He recalls attending to a female patient who wanted 8-cup breasts because her husband wanted them, and a male patient who wanted bigger nipples to match those of his wife.

Before and after breast augmentation by Dr. Tan Ying Chien.



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Dr. Tan Ying Chien, a cosmetic surgeon with The Sloane Clinic Plastic Surgery Centre, says that he has seen teenage boys who want their lips to be as thin as Andy Lau's, women that want very big breast implants, and also patients who bring a photo of their idol to his clinic and request to look exactly like that particular celebrity.

However, Dr. Tan says that most patients are very reasonable and realistic, though they have higher expectations when it comes to achieving natural results.

"It used to be that they didn't want people to think that they had gone for eye surgery, yet they wanted people to detect the change – that it's better than before. Now, most patients will say that if people notice, they're not going to hide, they couldn't be bothered by what people think."

THE PS BLOGGER

Rachel Tan, also known as **PROXITY** in the blogosphere, is a Singaporean lifestyle blogger. The 23-year-old lass first started taking blogging seriously in March 2011 and has updated www.proxity.com regularly ever since. As a blogger, Rachel has been very candid and freely shares aspects of her personal life, including her plastic surgery experience with Dr. Andrew Tay, a consultant plastic surgeon with The Plastic Surgery Practice at Novena Medical Centre. She talks to Rachel about her plastic surgery experience.

When did you start considering plastic surgery?
I started to get interested in plastic surgery when I was 19. It started as passing remarks with my friends but when I saw people around me getting lip surgery, it felt like surgery was something that I should have. I started to improve the way I looked, in the same way that some girls apply make-up and do their hair. I was born with single eyelids and my eyes were really small. I didn't find that attractive, so when I heard about the work done using medical or creating double eyelids, I decided to go for it.

Were your friends and family supportive of your decision to undergo plastic surgery?
Yes they were. But they were concerned about my safety, with all chances of complications, and made sure that I was completely comfortable. I made my first decision because they didn't want me to do it on impulse. I didn't feel that I needed to explain to the surgeons, usually anonymous keyboard warriors, because the surgery would be done to my face and I want for the



plains. "But it's necessary because if patients are bothered by a certain aspect of their appearance, then doing quality surgery actually allows them to focus on the positive aspects of their lives. Something is bothering them, you eliminate that, they are no longer bothered and can take life full on."

Dr. Chua, however, attributes the growing cosmetic surgery trend to the new digital age and the internet boom over the past decade or two.

"Previously, you could not have known how breast enlargement is done, but now there are videos, webinars, chat rooms, blogs, forums... there is so much knowledge available."

Chua also notes that the influx of medical tourists has contributed to the growth of the healthcare industry. Dr. Tan agrees that the K-Wave is a big influence.

"The K-Wave brought a lot of changes. In Korea, plastic surgery is commonplace and they're very casual in their acceptance of change, as well as radical in the way you can change the human face. They are not afraid to themselves look like someone else."

MEDICAL TOURISM BOOM

South Korea's success in promoting itself as a medical tourism hub is...

...surgery only because I...

How did you physio for double eyelid surgery?

I read up online about what I can do, what all the general reviews in blog about my experience before the surgery.

What factors did you decide to have to?

I think the main impact was double. Dr. Andrew didn't rush me into me to think about the cost, he decided whether or not I should (by cutting or not).

You have also had blepharoplasty.

Yes, I had double eyelid surgery and also went with permanent temporary derm. It's been a tremendous...



"We will regulate by selecting the best people to come into the specialty, and by training the people that we take in to a high level of competency. So if you go to a plastic surgeon in Singapore, and if he's accredited by the Singapore Association of Plastic Surgeons, you can be assured of a certain level of competency," says Dr. Wong.

...and, then they can spend their time reviewing them."

But he also quickly adds that there are several disadvantages.

"For some people who come back after surgery in Korea and they don't know what was done. The price wasn't disclosed. The plastic surgeon just looked at them and they signed up without really knowing what they were getting themselves into. Sometimes, after surgery, they'll contact a plastic surgeon in Singapore to address issues like not getting what they wanted and when you call them about the communication process, there was hardly any communication before the surgery."

Dr. Tan says that it's important for him and his colleagues to "never rest on our laurels and always find that we are not good enough, that will actually spur us to continue to improve."

Dr. Chua says that it's important for plastic surgeons to keep up to date by attending conferences, reading medical literature and attending new products in their market. However, he also adds that the cost of a plastic surgeon is dependent on their work experience.

"The more hair you cut, the better you become at it because you will be able to assess other people with the hair. There, even if I have my eyes, I will still be able to cut the hair. So, however, surgical skill is a matter of experience," explains Dr. Chua.

Dr. Wong believes in learning from other countries to gain experience, and has gone to Australia, the United States, Canada and the United States of America.

"I did a lot of Asian aesthetic surgery in Taiwan. In Australasia, America, of course, it was mostly Canadian patients. So this gives me the best of both worlds in terms of understanding the unique needs of Asian patients, as well as applying some of the more advanced techniques to Canadian aesthetic surgery to Asian patients, with slight modification of the techniques."

SAPS AND REGULATION

Dr. Wong also adds that self-regulation is an important factor in ensuring the quality of the industry.

KEEPING UP & PRACTISING

As technology continually evolves over...

...this bar etc. There are some of the major pillars of my self-esteem and I know how it feels to suffer from these issues. So when I finally find a solution to a problem, I present it to the readers on my blog, and also share them before and after photos to help to provide the relevant information, put in case some of them might want to do the same. There has definitely been some backlash though. I received comments saying on how and saying that I was more after the double-eyelid surgery. But my blogpost is meant for those who read my blog and personal reviews, rather than for the detractors who still will have a bone to pick with me no matter what I do, so I still chose to post it.

What is the influence of celebrities and social media on your outlook towards plastic surgery?

It definitely influenced me quite significantly. For example, if the celebrity I like goes for a particular surgery, I would naturally be drawn to considering that procedure, especially if it made any sort of splash. One of my reasons for considering nose filler was that many celebrities have high nose bridges and I would not see how I'd look with a nose similar to theirs too.

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...to me, it's just another way of beautifying yourself. Some people may think that it's a fad and somewhat, but even if it is, showing, showing, showing, that's applying make-up and buying clothes, it's not really a fad. I think that people should be naturally and emotionally stable enough to undergo plastic surgery, and that's what they want for themselves, and not to be considered. They should just go for it. They do have to keep in mind the consequences, such as being judged as plastic/fake, and the chances of complications.

As a blogger, how do you deal with detractors who are against plastic surgery?

"People who read detractors. Despite what detractors don't read." At the end of the day, the decisions I make in my life are my own. I should be caring more about coming back safe and being physically able to take care of my parents after the surgery, rather than what the detractors might say if I go for surgery.

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The term "plastic surgery" sometimes comes with negative connotations to the more conservative. What does plastic surgery mean to you?

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Globalisation is also an important factor that helped push cosmetic surgery to the forefront of the healthcare industry. Dr. Tan believes that the K-Wave is a big influence. "The K-Wave brought a lot of changes. In Korea, plastic surgery is so common and they're very radical in their acceptance of change, as well as radical in the way you can change the human face. They are willing to make themselves look like someone completely different."

Dr. Tan says that the expatriate population in Singapore has contributed to this figure, with about 30 percent of his patients being expatriates. But he also adds that, "about 15 percent travel all the way to Singapore for aesthetic treatment. Because of globalisation, I've got patients flying in from Russia, Korea and Mongolia for surgery."

With the rise of medical tourism, local plastic surgeons now find themselves competing with fellow practitioners around the world. The stiff competition ensures that they constantly improve on their practice. Dr. Tan says that it is important for him and his colleagues to "never rest on our laurels and always feel that we are not good enough; that will actually spur us to become better."

"We need to be more specific at setting certain rules... the more invasive procedures should naturally be restricted to plastic surgeons," adds Dr. Tan. "Having said that, the rules set must also be followed very closely. There is no point setting up a rule that nobody follows."

While South Korea has achieved remarkable success in revolutionising plastic surgery, plastic surgeons in Singapore still hope that the country does not follow in Korea's footsteps. "Ideally, I hope that we don't become like Korea in the sense that everyone looks so generic... you need to preserve your identity. You just need to be a better version of yourself," says Dr. Tan.

Is there a real fear that one may easily become addicted to plastic surgery?

Yes, definitely! I recently wrote down a list of things I would like to change about my face if I got the chance to go to Korea, and I saw my list getting longer and longer, which scared me. But for now, I won't be able to go for any of them because my parents are against them. They are afraid that if they let me go for these procedures so easily, I might get addicted!