

THREE MEDAESTHETICS MYTHS WE NEED TO BUST



A recent RealSelf Aesthetics Interest Survey reveals eye-opening trends.

BY TOM SEERY, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, FOUNDER AND CEO OF REALSELF

Preconceptions. We know that they're a vestige of a time when human survival depended on being able to draw quick conclusions based on our previous experiences. We also know they can cause problems when misapplied in our modern lives.

Bad assumptions and preconceptions about the target market for cosmetic procedures abound. The most recent RealSelf Aesthetics Interest Survey¹ reveals some eye-opening trends about who is really interested in getting work done—and what procedures they're interested in. You're at the front lines of this changing landscape, so some of these insights might validate your own observations with your practice. Others might surprise you.

Armed with the right information, our industry can work in lockstep to undo misconceptions about who your current and potential patients are and equip everyone to have better conversations that enable more consumers to enjoy the benefits of our work. Read on to learn what the data say about who is considering cosmetic procedures, what procedures they're thinking about getting done, and why.

MYTH: COSMETIC PROCEDURES ARE A NICHE INTEREST.

FACT: A BROAD SPECTRUM OF PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN BOTH SURGICAL AND NON-SURGICAL PROCEDURES.

Cosmetic procedures have veered into the mainstream as costs have come down, stigmas have fallen away, and nonsurgical options have broadened the sector. This is a significant opportunity for medaesthetic practices, and the industry should continue to adjust its notion of who its customers are in order to take advantage of the full potential patient population.

A significant portion of adults—37 percent—report that they are considering undergoing at least one cosmetic treatment in the next 12 months, according to the RealSelf 2018 Aesthetics Interest Survey. Cosmetic procedures have significantly broader appeal than they did previously, and practices need to adapt to take advantage.

Doctors and medspas should try talking to the broad base of potential consumers who might one day book appoint-

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ments for aesthetic procedures. They should make their businesses a viable option by intentionally shepherding a portion of those who are merely considering cosmetic treatments through the process of having their questions answered, booking a consultation, booking an appointment, and even becoming a repeat customer.

To do this, practices should take a second look at their services menu. Are they offering a range of services that might attract consumers who are looking for minimally invasive options, or who have less money to spend? It isn't a given that the more than one in three adults who are thinking about having a cosmetic treatment done next year will eventually get one. Practices increase their chances of winning consults and bookings if they're in the mix early in the customer journey: offering helpful content about procedures, answering questions, and providing information about their own services, including before-and-after photos.

Millions of consumers visit RealSelf monthly to research procedures and find providers. It's a great environment for practices to position themselves as a source of information, and to convert browsers into bookers. Practices should start there to begin engaging with early-stage potential patients in their area.

Lastly, practices should consider doing virtual consultations. It's a way to provide an effective handoff between consumers' digital research and live consultations.

Myth Buster: Cosmetic procedures are not a niche interest. A RealSelf survey reveals that a broad spectrum of people are interested in having both surgical and non-surgical procedures.

MYTH: COSMETIC PROCEDURES ARE FOR WOMEN.

FACT: MEN ARE AS INTERESTED AS WOMEN IN COSMETIC PROCEDURES. THE DROP-OFF OCCURS IN THE FOLLOW THROUGH.

More women undergo cosmetic procedures than men, but the ranks of male patients are surging. Smart practices are taking notice—and taking advantage.

When it comes to the consideration-to-booking challenge, practices should pay special attention to men moving through that process and why they're dropping off. When it comes to consideration, according to the RealSelf Aesthetics Interest survey, just as many men as women say they intend to undergo a cosmetic procedure next year.

To retain and attract more men, practices should know the specific procedures men are interested in—they differ significantly from the treatments women are seeking. Men are more than twice as likely as women to be considering breast reduction, with interest highest among males between the ages of 35-44. Men also show significantly higher interest in eyelid surgery—six percent are considering the treatment in the next 12 months, compared to four percent of women.

Cosmetic surgeons and medspas could take a page out of the consumer packaged goods playbook and bundle up relevant services on their websites, in their marketing, and on their business and social media profiles as “for men”—even though they are very likely to overlap with women's procedures. This principle can also be ported into the practice itself: some men may be shy about mingling with women in waiting rooms during the procedure process, so launching a men's “center” within the practice, or another man-focused practice altogether, could be worthwhile to consider. Doctors and medspas should tout their expertise in administering treatments to men, make a special effort to get reviews from male patients, and secure their permission to use before-and-after photos online and in other marketing.

Myth Buster: Did you know that men are nearly as interested as women in having cosmetic work done? With more inclusive conversations, we can help more men follow through.

MYTH: MORE MATURE PEOPLE ARE MOST LIKELY TO GET COSMETIC WORK DONE.

FACT: YOUNGER AGE GROUPS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OLDER AGE GROUPS TO GET TREATMENTS—BUT A MAJOR BLOCKER CAN STAND IN THE WAY.

Cosmetic surgery is often associated with advancing age, but that profile doesn't jibe with how interest in cosmetic procedures breaks down by age group in 2018.

The RealSelf Aesthetics Interest Survey report shows

younger age groups, those ages 18-34 and 35-44, are more likely than older age groups to have had or be considering both surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic treatments.

The key for attracting younger brackets of potential cosmetic consumers is to demystify the landscape of aesthetic procedures. The RealSelf Aesthetics Interest Survey report reveals that 18- to 34-year-olds were about twice as likely than all older age groups to say confusion about treatment options was a cause for concern when considering whether to move forward with a procedure.

It pays for practices to be clear and straightforward about their offerings—doing this can pay off for attracting consults from younger consumers, and for the practice in general. While marketing materials should be on hand for those who want to explore specific treatment options, it also helps to organize your information for the early-stage researcher who knows what problem area they want to take care of—and little else. Practices should provide information to help them understand treatment options based on their patient profile. They can also layer in common concerns, like cost, risks, and downtime, to help those researching treatments sort and filter options. By the time the prospective patient arrives at a short list of treatment options, they should have also gotten a helpful starter education on the landscape of relevant cosmetic procedures.

Myth Buster: The age group most interested in undergoing cosmetic produces? 18-34. Younger age groups are most likely to have had or be considering cosmetic treatments—but they also want to understand the landscape.

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Medaesthetics trends will continue to shift as awareness grows, procedures evolve and new technologies emerge. Practitioners across the industry should make it a habit to stay on top of not just what procedures people are getting done, but what consumers say they're interested in—and hung up on—based on reputable survey data like the RealSelf Consumer Trends report.

But it isn't necessary to exclusively rely on third-party reports. Study the data and trends about how consumers are behaving at your own practice and get hyperlocal data about what opportunities might be emerging by polling your own patients. The ground is shifting, so continue to follow the data. ■

1. https://drive.google.com/file/d/15Q5EKm9vP_a70kQwuBejnH5ifzq_iot/view

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■ Tom Seery is the founder and CEO of RealSelf, the most popular online resource that helps consumers research cosmetic treatments and find the right medical aesthetic provider. Each month, RealSelf attracts 10 million unique visitors and sends 500,000 contacts to providers.

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