

An Educated Patient Can Be an Asset

By Candace Crowe

Not very long ago, sunbathing without sun block was considered a harmless activity and an inexpensive beauty treatment. Today, this is but one myth that scientists have debunked. **New discoveries relating to cosmetic health are made every day**, and your patients need help to understand all of the information that is available to them.

Informed patients make better decisions about their health, starting with the decision of whether or not to have plastic surgery. It is important that the patient have access to accurate information about the procedure that he or she is considering. A patient needs to know how to best prepare for the procedure, how the procedure will be performed, and about self-care after the procedure. Since you know best what the patient needs to know, consider carefully how you will deliver that information.

Remember that every individual has a different learning style. In his well-known study on multiple intelligences, Dr. Howard Gardner found that there are six ways of learning in addition to visual and logical. For best results, try some alternate ways of educating your patients. **Use an interactive educational software program like Revenez, where the patient experiences hands-on learning**. Or, refer them to your up-to-date website. You could also provide a list of prior patients that are available to relate their personal experience and answer questions. The important thing is to make sure that patients are receiving the information that will best help them to achieve their desired results.

Prospective patients may have fears that can be assuaged by having complete information about their surgery prior to entering the operating room. For some people, going under anesthesia alone is frightening. Others are afraid that the procedure will be painful, or that the outcome will not meet their expectations. To help patients cope with the fears of surgery, it is best to be completely honest about any risks involved and about what can reasonably be done to improve their appearances. Simply providing this information to patients in your office, on take-home CDs, through e-mail, or by phone, can give them **added assurance that you care as much as they do** about the results of their surgery.

According to the American Board of Plastic Surgery, interpersonal skills are one of the primary tools that a plastic surgeon must use to achieve patient satisfaction. By communicating with and educating your patients, they can become assets to you. Fewer conflicts about what is best for the patient can be avoided when the patient fully understands the reasoning behind the doctor's recommendations. Also, an informed patient will be able to relay to friends and family what will be going on before, during, and after the operation. At some point, those friends and family members could become patients of yours, too.

The decision about whether to have plastic surgery is a very personal and life-changing event. **How you decide to educate your patients will directly impact the level of satisfaction that your patients experience**, and allow you to help more people achieve the look of their dreams.



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