

# The Growth of Aesthetic Medicine



**AANA**  
American Aesthetic Nursing Association



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## Medical Aesthetics: A Growing Industry

The Medical Aesthetic market is booming. For evidence, one need only look at the positive growth in annual procedures performed from 1997 to 2007. In 1997 there were approximately 1.1 million non-surgical cosmetic procedures performed in the United States. Five years later in 2002 there were 5.3 million; by 2006 this number nearly doubled to 9.2 million.<sup>1</sup> Stated more directly, this industry has grown over 830% over the last 10 years.

This level of tremendous consistent growth speaks for itself. To understand this growth, and to determine if it is sustainable, it is important to look at the roles played by patients, the public, technologic advances, and the doctors and nurses who will perform these procedures.

### What is causing the growth in demand for Medical Aesthetics?

#### *A. What patients have to say*

There are a wide range of reasons women, and increasingly men, are electing to have non-surgical cosmetic procedures performed. These reasons range from wanting to look younger, to competitive work-related reasons, to improving self-esteem, to reasons as simple as wanting to minimize wrinkles. All of these reasons may have been summed up best however by one 40-year-old business owner and mother who said, “Nobody thinks I look my age, and I feel more confident. Plus, it’s great that I can pretty much get off the table and go.”<sup>2</sup>

The numbers support her statement. In 2004, 49% of women said the main factor in deciding to have a procedure was to look younger (and 41% of men as well). Men were more likely than women to cite work or competitive reasons as an incentive to have a procedure. Her point about the convenience of non-surgical procedures was echoed by an analyst at the Millennium Research Group: “There has been a dramatic move toward minimally invasive procedures. No one wants to sit out three weeks recovering. They want things done as quickly as possible.”<sup>3</sup> This is supported by the numbers as well. In 1997 surgical

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<sup>1</sup> **The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery** Contact: ASAP Communications – 212.921.0500

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<sup>2</sup> **Elizabeth Esfahani**, “The new skin trade,” *Business 2.0 Magazine*, February 5, 2006

<sup>3</sup> **Elizabeth Esfahani**, “The new skin trade,” *Business 2.0 Magazine*, February 5, 2006

procedures accounted for 46% of all cosmetic procedures and only 16% in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

The bottom line is that the American population is aging. Baby Boomers are entering their early sixties, and, to use a cliché, 50 is the new 30. This generation is not interested in sitting back and letting the aging-cycle run its course. They want to fight the aging cycle, and they are looking for ways to look as young as they feel. As the above numbers illustrate a large number of these individuals are choosing aesthetic medicine to look better, feel better, and feel more confident. Following is a more exhaustive examination of America's largest generation.

It is important to note however, that while beauty and youthfulness are the driving motivators for many, especially in the Baby Boomer market, to seek cosmetic procedures, they are by no means the only forces driving people to get these procedures. There are also exist deeper, less superficial motivators. Illustrative of this are the following patient stories.

### **Laser Tattoo Removal**

Mr. Donch was a substitute teacher who, in his youth, had a black-and-white tattoo depicting scenes of suffering souls and multicolored stained-glass windows drawn on his lower right leg. Mr. Donch embodied the sentiments of many when he said, "As I am getting older and planning to start a family and get my teaching certificate, I am more aware that appearances are important."<sup>5</sup> According to a poll conducted by the Food and Drug Administration, it is estimated that 17 percent of Americans who currently have tattoos regret getting them.

### **Curing Skin Disorders**

The most common skin disorder, by far, is acne. Today, over 60 million Americans are suffering from active acne, 20 million of which have acne badly enough that it can cause scars.<sup>6</sup> While this is not life threatening, to those that suffer from it, it can provide a crippling blow to their self-esteem and self-confidence. Aesthetic procedures offer solutions to diseases such as acne, as well as for other skin disorders such as Rosacea and Hyperpigmentation.

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<sup>5</sup> **Natasha Singer**, "Erasing Tattoos, Out of Regret or for a New Canvas," New York Times, June 17, 2007

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.acne-resource.org/understanding-acne/acne-statistics.html>

Dr. Amanda Oakley and Dr. John Collier describe the potential effects of acne on those suffering from it in their article Psychological Effects of Acne. In it they explain that, “The psychological and social impacts of acne are a huge concern especially because it affects adolescents at a time they are developing their personalities. During this time, peer acceptance is very important to the teenager and unfortunately it has been found that physical appearance and attractiveness is highly linked with peer status. In some patients the distress of acne may result in depression.”<sup>7</sup> It is these individuals who most desperately seek a solution to this curable problem, and it is aesthetic medicine that offers one of the best cures.

### ***B. Demographics: An in depth look at the baby boomer generation***

The 78 million Americans referred to as “baby boomers” are aging. The oldest members of this group will begin their early sixties this year, with the youngest now reaching their mid-forties. The overall market impact of America’s largest generation getting older is stated best by J. Walker Smith and Ann Cluman, authors of Generation Ageless. They state that:

Baby boomers, more than any other demographic group, will shape the future of the marketplace. They are in control and will remain so for decades to come. For Boomers, getting older does not mean resigning oneself to a deceleration into death. They will continue to be actively involved in their lifestyles, spending lots of money and searching for more new things to try.<sup>8</sup>

In particular, this generation is looking to ‘decelerate’ aging. They are looking for new things to try to help them look outwardly, the way they feel inwardly. It is this demographic phenomenon that has a particularly strong impact on the medical aesthetic industry, as, for baby boomers:

Youthfulness has been the most celebrated characteristic of this generation...Over and over, they were told that youth would lead the way, so unsurprisingly, they came to value their youthfulness as their most powerful and meaningful characteristic.<sup>9</sup>

Stated plainly, Baby Boomers do not want to get old. “Boomers have not matured into midlife reconciled with being old; instead, they have endeavored to stay youthful at every stage.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://dermnetnz.org/acne/acne-psychological-effects.html>

<sup>8</sup> J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, Generation Ageless, Yankelovich, Inc. 2007

<sup>9</sup> J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, Generation Ageless, Yankelovich, Inc. 2007

<sup>10</sup> J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, Generation Ageless, Yankelovich, Inc. 2007

Baby Boomers are looking for new ways to maintain a youthful appearance. They understand both the value of youthfulness in the workplace, and, they just simply don't want anything to do with old age, in particular the wrinkles that accompany it.<sup>11</sup> This assertion is supported by Botox® Cosmetic, the leading injectable aimed at reducing wrinkles. In 2002 there were approximately 1.6 million procedures performed. In just 4 years, this number had doubled, resulting in 3.2 million procedures being performed in 2006.<sup>12</sup> As Baby Boomers continue to grow older, and continue to develop new newly despised wrinkles, their demand for non-surgical cosmetic procedures should only continue to increase.

### ***C. Society and Cultural Acceptance***

Accompanying this demographic trend is a growing wave of societal acceptance for aesthetic procedures, particularly for minimally invasive cosmetic procedures. According to a 10-year study performed by the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, people in the United States have become more and more approving of cosmetic procedures and in 2007 the approval rate has reached an all-time high.<sup>13</sup> The group that had the most significant increase in approval (an 11% increase) was those aged 65 years and over. This trend will certainly continue as the youth-loving baby boomers reach this age.

It is important to note however, that this growth in demand will not wane after the baby boomers pass, as, "Americans between the ages of 18-24 are more likely to approve of cosmetic surgery than those in any other age group."<sup>14</sup> This fact is indicative of the trend that cosmetic procedures are increasingly accepted by the American culture.

For further evidence, one need only look at any major entertainment outlet. Be it in leading magazines or major TV outlets, such as FOX's *The Swan*, cosmetic procedures are being viewed in a more positive, far-reaching light. As more baby boomers continue having these procedures, and as the most accepting generation comes of age to begin frequently having these procedures, societal acceptance will only continue its current positive trend.

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<sup>11</sup> J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, *Generation Ageless*, Yankelovich, Inc. 2007

<sup>12</sup> **The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery** Contact: ASAPS Communications – 212.921.0500

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/64921.php>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/64921.php>

#### ***D. Technology and the Virtuous Cycle***

Part of what is increasing the cultural acceptance of cosmetic procedures is that they are becoming safer, less invasive, quicker, and cheaper. Technology has reacted to this outstanding demand for cosmetic procedures by delivering new and innovative ways to help people conveniently improve their skin and appearance.

This chain of events is creating what is often referred to in economics as the “virtuous cycle.” In this case, the high demand for cosmetic procedures creates an incentive for technology suppliers to meet the demand for new procedures and profit from doing so. As they create these new technologies, procedures become safer, more convenient, and ultimately more effective. Because of the improved procedures, more and more people are willing to participate in a cosmetic procedure.

Technology in the medical aesthetics industry thus creates a “virtuous cycle” because it both benefits from high demand for new procedures and also helps to stimulate more demand for procedures. One very specific example of this phenomenon has to do with new advancements that make procedures as effective on darker skin tones as lighter skin tones. This opens up an entirely new market segment whose demands for procedures were previously going unmet.

#### ***E. Growing numbers of Nurses entering Medical Aesthetics***

When nurses look at the Medical Aesthetic industry, they see a market that is growing, that has more positions available than qualified people to fill them, and that offers an increased quality of life relative to other fields of nursing. In large part, this increased quality of life can be attributed to the fact that aesthetic nurses get paid more, work less, and work in less stressful environments than their traditional nursing counterparts. Additionally, there are more subtle motivators for joining the growing number of nurses performing aesthetic procedures. Chief among these is the fact that “medical aesthetics sets the tone for a more positive work environment because you are treating healthy patients who want to look as good as they feel.”<sup>15</sup> It also helps that nurses feel that “you will help to make many people’s lives better by helping them feel better about themselves through the treatments you will administer.”<sup>16</sup>

The potential for autonomy is compelling as well. Aesthetic nurses are in an excellent place to capitalize on the tremendous demand for these

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<sup>15</sup> <http://nurse-practitioners.advanceweb.com/Editorial/Content/Editorial.aspx?CC=81797>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.aestheticjobs.com/jobs/esthetic-np-jobs.htm>

services, as they can perform medical aesthetic procedures independently or with limited participation from a collaborating physician. In the field of medical aesthetics, the nurse is the driving engine. They are the ones that interact most directly with patients, and, in some cases, perform the bulk of the procedures. In this field, nurses have the opportunity to be as independent as the midwife.

#### ***F. Growing numbers of Doctors entering Medical Aesthetics***

Doctors cite similar reasons for joining the medical aesthetics industry. According to feedback given by participating doctors at the 2007 symposium put on by the International Association for Physicians in Aesthetic Medicine, doctors are choosing Medical Aesthetics for financial and quality of life reasons. “The combination of reducing reimbursements, increasing costs, and longer working hours is leaving many family physicians no choice but to leave their traditional practice behind and open an aesthetic medicine practice or add aesthetic medicine procedures to their existing practices.”<sup>17</sup> Medical Aesthetics provides a better financial situation for doctors in part because it creates more cash flow with such healthy demand, and it cuts out the administrative costs of dealing with insurance companies. Other doctors at the symposium cited extreme stress from working in emergency rooms as a major factor as well.

This may be summed up best by the following quote from the New York Times that states how doctors are:

...turning to cosmetic medicine because they were tired of heavy patient caseloads, long workweeks, high malpractice insurance premiums and the paperwork and payment structure imposed by Medicaid and managed care.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the monetary and direct work related reasons, there also exists less tangible motivators for entering aesthetic medicine. For example, Dr. Nwankpa-Keshinro, spent three years as an obstetrician and gynecologist in Brooklyn, until she transitioned to cosmetic Nwankpa-Keshiro said, “The two fields are alike as an apple and an orange. One can be lifesaving, while the other is not. But when you clear up someone’s acne or facial hair, they are as grateful as if you delivered their baby.” She also said that cosmetic medicine provides a more relaxing lifestyle, and that “it’s very satisfying.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/76602.php>

<sup>18</sup> **Natasha Singer**, “More Doctors Turning to the Business of Beauty,” New York Times, November 30, 2006

<sup>19</sup> **Natasha Singer**, “More Doctors Turning to the Business of Beauty,” New York Times, November 30, 2006

Doctors see an industry that is growing, that is less stressful, as fulfilling, and, potentially, more lucrative than other forms of medicine. It is of no wonder then that more and more doctors are seeking to meet the growing demand for aesthetic procedures. As these doctors begin their successful entrance into the field, the demand for trained, qualified nurses will only continue to grow. It is in some ways akin to the 'virtuous cycle' discussed earlier. As more doctors enter, more patients will have procedures performed, leading to greater demand for new doctors and new nurses.

## **Conclusions**

The past 10 years of growth in the med spa market are not an aberration. These growth trends are here to stay. For patients, non-surgical cosmetic procedures provide a way to slow the aging cycle, and as more and more people become accepting of these procedures, the numbers of people who will use aesthetic medicine to help them 'look as young as they feel' will only continue to increase. Meeting this increased demand will be doctors and nurses who are all too happy to enter the field of aesthetic medicine. For them, it means a less stressful work environment, increased financial opportunities, and greater quality of life. What is needed are institutions that will come to the forefront and offer these professionals the training and education needed to ensure every patient receives the highest possible care. The market is growing, and will continue to grow. The number of nurses and doctors looking to enter the field are growing in direct correlation to the market. It is a good time to be a part of the field of aesthetic medicine.

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