Views of College Students on Plastic Surgery

Muhammad Ahmad¹*, Humayun Mohmand², Nabila Ahmad³

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND
Various studies have been conducted in many countries to determine the perception/awareness about plastic surgery. The present study assessed the views of college students about plastic surgery.

METHODS
A questionnaire consisted of nine questions regarding the basic knowledge about plastic surgery was randomly distributed among college students. The students were given 20 minutes to fill out the forms.

RESULTS
A total of 250 male and 250 female college students were randomly included in the study. The mean age of the male students was 21.1 years as compared to 20.7 years of female students. The top five conditions named were related to hair (89.8%) followed by face scars (88%). The most common procedure named by the students was liposuction (88.2%) followed by hair transplantation. 80.2% of the students opted not to be a plastic surgeon if given an opportunity to select the profession. 33.8% of the students had seen some kinds of plastic surgery operation. Only 5.6% of the students (3.4% male and 2.2% female) had seen some kinds of plastic surgery procedure. 68% of male students and 48% of female students wished to have a plastic surgery procedure sometime in their lives. Majority of the students (88%) got the information from the internet. The second most common source was magazines (85.2%). Majority of the students (53.4%) had an idea of an invisible scar as a result of having a plastic surgery procedure. Only 22% thought to have no scar. Late Michael Jackson was at the top of the list of celebrities having a plastic surgery procedure (97.8%) followed by Nawaz Shariff (92.4%).

CONCLUSION
Despite the rapid growth of plastic surgery in the last two decades, a large portion of population remains unaware of the spatiality. It is essential to institute programs to educate healthcare consumers and providers about the plastic surgery.

KEYWORDS
Views; College; Student; Plastic surgery

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Received: October 1, 2012
Accepted: February 1, 2013
INTRODUCTION

The specialty of plastic surgery is not very new. Scripts have been found in the ancient Papyrus. The procedure for nasal reconstruction was developed by Sushruta, an Indian surgeon. The development of plastic surgery as a specialty has resulted in a significant positive impact on health care, and the function and expertise of the plastic surgeons are well-defined, however, they are poorly known in the society. In spite of their extensive surgical training and technical skills, plastic surgeons are often recognized as performing only cosmetic surgeries. This is all because of media and celebrity worship. Media plays an important role in public education and opinion making. In Europe and America, both men and women are becoming increasingly concerned about their physical appearance and are seeking cosmetic enhancement, and most studies report that people are generally happy with the outcome of cosmetic procedures.

Various studies have been conducted in many countries to determine the perception/awareness about plastic surgery. The present study is of the first of its type in Pakistan assessing the perception of college students about plastic surgery.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A questionnaire based survey was conducted among male and female college students. The professional colleges of education, medical and engineering colleges were included. The information sought in the questionnaire included age and gender of the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of nine questions regarding the basic knowledge about plastic surgery (Figure 1). The colleges and students were all randomly selected. From each college, 50 students were selected. Four single-sex colleges (two male and two female) were enrolled and two co-education colleges were randomly chosen. The personal information about the students was kept confidential. The questionnaire was distributed in the classrooms and the students were allowed for 20 minutes to fill out the forms and they were collected on the same day. The questionnaires were distributed on different days in different colleges. The questionnaires were collected in the presence of principle investigator. All the collected data was tabulated and analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS (version 10.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA).

RESULTS

A total of 250 male and 250 female college students were randomly included in the study. Two male and two female colleges were enrolled with 50 students from each college. Similarly 50 male and 50 female students were selected from three co-education colleges. The mean age of the male students was 21.1 years as compared to 20.7 years of female students.

The top five treated conditions were related to hair (89.8%) and face scars (88%) (Table 1). The most common top 5 plastic surgery operations reported by the students were liposuction (88.2%) and hair transplantation (84.4%) (Table 2). Regarding the future of plastic surgery, 80.2% of the students opted not to be a plastic surgeon if given an opportunity to select the profession. 33.8% of the students reported previous observation of some kinds of plastic surgery (Figure 2). Only 5.6% of the students (3.2% male and 2.4% female) had undergone some kinds of plastic surgery and reported an experience. 68% of male students and 47% of female students wished to have a plastic surgery procedure sometime in their lives (Figure 3). Regarding source of information, the majority of the students (88%) reported to get the information from the internet. The second most common source was magazines (85.2%).

Table 1: Five conditions treated by plastic surgeons (n=500).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of surgery</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face scars</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>88.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nose</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>83.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face trauma</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scars</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moles</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounds</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging skin</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.wjps.ir /Vol.2/No.2/June 2013
SURVEY

Name: ........................................... Age: .......................... Date: ..........................
Institution: .......................................................... Class: ..........................

Q.1: Name FIVE conditions most often treated by Plastic Surgeons.
1. .................................................................
2. .................................................................
3. .................................................................
4. .................................................................
5. .................................................................

Q.2: Name FIVE Plastic Surgery Operations.
1. .................................................................
2. .................................................................
3. .................................................................
4. .................................................................
5. .................................................................

Q.3: Do you want to be a Plastic Surgeon if given a chance?
Yes  No

Q.4: Have you ever seen a Plastic surgery operations?
Yes  No

Q.5: Did you ever have a Plastic surgery operation?
Yes  No

Q.6: Do you wish to have a Plastic surgery operations anytime in your life?
Yes  No

Q.7: From where did you get the information about plastic surgery?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Mags</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>G.Ps.</td>
<td>Personal experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.8: What is your idea about scar after having a plastic surgery operation?
No scar  Invisible
Hardly Visible from 1 foot distance  Obvious from 1 foot distance
Visible from 5 feet distance

Q.9: Name FIVE celebrities having plastic surgery operation?
1. .................................................................
2. .................................................................
3. .................................................................
4. .................................................................
5. .................................................................

Fig. 1: The questionnaire consisted of nine questions regarding the basic knowledge about plastic surgery.
Table 2: Five Plastic Surgery Operations (n=500).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liposuction</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair transplant surgery</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>84.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nose reshaping</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>72.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin grafting</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laser</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleft lip</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast surgery</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin rejuvenation</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2: Regarding the future of plastic surgery, if students were given an opportunity to select the profession, how many would report previous observation of some kinds of plastic surgery?

Fig. 3: Number of students undergone some kinds of plastic surgery in relation to gender.
The majority of the students (53.4%) had an idea of an invisible scar as a result of having a plastic surgery procedure and just 22% did not mention any scar (Figure 4) and finally the top 5 celebrities were Late Michael Jackson as at the first celebrity having a plastic surgery (97.8%) followed by Nawaz Shariff (92.4%) (Table 4).

**DISCUSSION**

Plastic surgery is overlapped by many other specialties unlike other surgical disciplines.
which have more clearly defined areas and restrict
themselves to certain anatomical boundaries.\textsuperscript{1}
Because of the breadth of plastic surgery and the
diversity of the procedures, much information
needs to be spread in the society. According to
American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery,
nearly 8.3 million cosmetic procedures were
performed in 2003.\textsuperscript{3} This represents an increase
of 299\% since 1997.\textsuperscript{8} The marketing of cosmetic
surgery and related services to the patients is
becoming a major objective.\textsuperscript{1} As a result, the
public is becoming more aware of the role of the
plastic surgery. The specialty of plastic surgery
in not a very new one. The development of
plastic surgery as a specialty has resulted in a
significant positive impact on health care.

The present study is of the first of its kind
in Pakistan assessing the perceptions of college
students about plastic surgery. Majority of
the students did not see a plastic surgery procedure
and only 5.6\% of the respondents had a personal
experience of having a plastic surgery procedure.
Surprisingly, more than half of the students
(57.4\%) showed the intention to have a plastic
surgery procedure sometimes in their life. Most
of the information about plastic surgery was
received by internet (88\%). The different kind of
magazines and advertisements resulted in
attracting the students (85.2\%). TV shows and
advertisement attracted 34.2\% students. All
these advertisements resulted in friends-gup
shup and surprisingly in 62.8\% students, these
discussions were the primary source of the
information.

Another important point was also noted
that general practitioners gave some kind of
information in only 2.6\% of the students. This
indicates poor knowledge of the specialty among
the general public and even in the doctors. This
also warrants the extension of the similar study
among doctors. Thousands of hours are spent
in plastic surgery training; none of the time is
dedicated to community relations and public
information.\textsuperscript{3} We have learned how to provide a
service but not how to sell the product.

A similar study conducted in the university
students in USA indicated that 48\% of students
would consider plastic surgery operations as
compared to 57.4\% in our study.\textsuperscript{6} Only 14.6\%
of students showed their willingness to undergo
such surgery in the study by Adeyemo \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{3} The
less number of the students showing willingness
may be due to the fact that it was conducted
in third world country (Nigeria). Nigeria has a
literacy rate of 72.0\% as compared to Pakistan
54.2\%.\textsuperscript{9,10} The most important difference between
these two studies is that our study was conducted
among students whereas the study by Adeyemo
\textit{et al.} was conducted in the professionals in banking
industry and civil services.\textsuperscript{3}

The most common plastic surgery conditions
were related to hair (89.9\%) followed by face
scars (88.0\%) and nose (83.4\%). But in the study
by Agarwal \textit{et al.}, burns were the most common
condition (20.4\%) as compared to 73.4\% in our
study.\textsuperscript{1} The most frequently named procedures was
liposuction (88.2\%) followed by hair transplant
surgery (84.4\%) whereas liposuction was named
in 53\% in the study by Adeyemo \textit{et al.}.\textsuperscript{6}

We have included a very important factor
in our study which was not included in other
studies\textsuperscript{3,6,7,11} and that was the ideas about scars
after having plastic surgery operations. The
majority of students (53.4\%) thought the scars
would be invisible. One fourth of the students
had the misconception that there would not be
any scar. Only 1.6\% thought that it would be a
quite visible scar.

We also included a question to name five
celebrities having some kinds of plastic surgery
procedure. The ‘face’ of the plastic surgery,
Michael Jackson was at the top of the list (97.8\%)
followed by former Pakistani Prime Minister,
Nawaz Sharif (92.4\%).

This survey suggested that the perceptions of
plastic surgery in our society were limited and
underestimated the versatility of the specialty.
Therefore, we recommend improved liaison
with general practitioners and the institutions
of public awareness programs. Public awareness
programs should be instituted through the print
media and on TV and should be done judiciously
and with dignity. The limitations of our study
may be that the students sample was obtained
from the same geographical area and this might
underestimate the true nature of the awareness
level. Despite the rapid growth of plastic
surgery in the last two decades, a large portion
of population remains unaware of the spatiality.
It is essential to institute programs to educate
health care consumers and providers about the
plastic surgery.

\textbf{CONFLICT OF INTEREST}

The authors declare no conflict of interest.
REFERENCES