



# ISAPS NEWS

Official Newsletter of the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery

## OVER 20 MILLION COSMETIC PROCEDURES WORLDWIDE

**O**n July 8, ISAPS released our Annual Report on global cosmetic procedures to the international media and added the information to the ISAPS website. Media interest has been very keen since.

Over 20 million cosmetic surgical and nonsurgical procedures were performed worldwide in 2014, according to data received for the 2015 ISAPS Global Survey. This includes 9,645,395 surgical procedures and 10,591,506 non-surgical procedures.

Botulinum Toxin remains the most popular cosmetic procedure overall for both men and women. For surgical procedures, breast augmentation is highest among women while eyelid surgery is prevalent among men. Procedures in men increased from 12.8% in 2013 to 13.7% in 2014.

The ISAPS website provides the full report on all procedures, the press release in twenty-two languages, and Quick Facts about the findings. To see this information, go to [www.isaps.org](http://www.isaps.org) and click on the NEWS section in the top menu.

“We have improved our survey methodology to reflect a statistically valid picture of our field,” noted Susumu Takayanagi, MD, ISAPS

president. “Our society is committed to following sound analytical practices in creating this valuable report.”



Global Survey

The countries that performed the most surgical and nonsurgical procedures in 2014 include:

- United States – 4,064,571 (20.1%)
- Brazil – 2,058,505 (10.2%)
- Japan – 1,260,351 (6.2%)
- South Korea – 980,313 (4.8%)
- Mexico – 706,072 (3.5%)
- Germany – 533,622 (2.6%)
- France – 416,148 (2.1%)
- Colombia – 357,115 (1.8%)

Rankings are based solely on those countries from which a sufficient survey response was received and data were considered to be representative and statistically valid. Invitations to participate were emailed to our

extensive list of over 35,000 plastic surgeons and extended to national societies around the world to enlist their help through our 85 national secretaries. We thank them for their assistance in encouraging all plastic surgeons to participate. The focus was on reaching as many Board Certified (or the equivalent) plastic surgeons as possible.

ISAPS is the only organization that collects this type of data on a global scale and the study is viewed as a valuable resource in our field. Those who participate in the survey play a large role in helping us achieve the best representation worldwide. In turn, this helps us promote ISAPS members to the public.

The top ten countries with the highest number of plastic surgeons are: United States, Brazil, China, Japan, India, South Korea, Russia, Mexico, Turkey and Germany according to numbers provide by national societies of plastic surgery.

# ONLINE PLASTIC SURGERY CONSULTATIONS: PEARLS AND PITFALLS

Gary D. Breslow, MD – United States



Like most other plastic surgeons, time is my most precious commodity. Wasting it on cosmetic consultations that do not result in a procedure can be extremely frustrating. For the average plastic surgeon, only about one-third of all cosmetic consultations actually result in a procedure being performed. On a typical day, that may translate into three to four hours being spent on consultations that go nowhere. The reasons are varied. Some patients are interested in a procedure that is not appropriate for them. Others are appropriate candidates, but cannot afford the procedure they desire and do not realize this until the consultation. Still others are just shopping around for the best price. The list goes on and on.

Years ago, some colleagues and I began referring to this issue as the Consultation Conundrum. The crux of the conundrum is that it is generally not apparent the consultation was a waste of time until it is over—after the time has already been spent. And it is a waste of time for patients, too. 90% of all cosmetic patients are women, most of whom have jobs, children or both, and they do not have time to go on multiple consultations to find out which procedure and which cosmetic doctor is right for them. Popular strategies like charging for consultations do very little to address this, as that effectively creates a barrier and diverts serious cosmetic patients to doctors who do not charge a fee.

In the age of online living, there may be a solution to the Consultation Conundrum after all. As the Internet and its various social media outlets have now become the primary source of information for all things consumed, there is actually a viable way for plastic surgeons to effectively and efficiently interact with potential patients and transform the consultation process – *online consultations*.

With online consultations, we can bridge the communication gap between cosmetic patients and doctors, streamlining the consultation process. Your online consultation can be as simple as a common Contact Us form on your website where patients send comments on what they are interested in to more elaborate virtual consultation platforms. In this scenario, patients can add photos to the description of what they would like done to full, live video-chats, almost as if they were in your office.

However, while online consultations may seem like an easy solution to the Consultation Conundrum, the reality is that there are pitfalls and limitations to its widespread use and acceptance. To begin, most online interfaces in use today are either too simple with insufficient pertinent information being elicited by potential patients to make them useful to the doctor. Sometimes they are too complex, creating an onerous, exam-like experience that is largely shunned by the patients. Secondly, unless online consultation interfaces can assure potential patients that the online portal is private and secure, few will feel comfortable participating. Lastly, depending upon the country and/or state in which you are licensed to practice medicine, online consultation platforms must be formatted in a way that adheres to the laws regarding the practice of telemedicine, to the extent that they may apply. As a result, online consultations have yet to find a solid footing in cosmetic medicine.



Zwivel, a free, user-friendly, interactive online consultation platform that plastic surgeons can place on their own websites. This enables them to interact with and prescreen for potential patients prior

to a full, in-office consultation, thereby saving both patients and doctors valuable time. With Zwivel, patients select their concerns and desired procedures, upload photos and record videos, and answer some basic questions about their medical history, budget and time frame for a cosmetic procedure. The plastic surgeon can review the information and respond with their recommendations and estimated fees, and even record their own video response. The patient can then review the recommendation and decide if they want to come in for a full, in-office consultation. The entire process is completely HIPAA/HITECH compliant, private and secure, and one-to-one between each doctor and each patient.

Beyond using online consultations as a tool to prequalify your patients, they can also be a great option for plastic surgeons who have a more international practice, with patients who cannot easily come in for multiple appointments prior to arranging for surgery. The ISAPS website contains a planning check-list for people considering going overseas for surgery. The very first bullet on that check-list is to plan a pre-consultation with the doctor. Imagine how much easier it would be if you could get all of the pre-consultation details wrapped up, including discussions regarding financing, recovery and after-care needs without an in-office visit.

As the digital world continues to shrink our global village, the healthcare industry will come to embrace the use of online consultations and patients will continue to push for more opportunities to communicate with and investigate potential providers. Virtual pre-consultations and follow-up care can help your practice work more efficiently by freeing up your time so you can focus on performing procedures, building your practice or maybe even just relaxing.

