



Aesthetic Surgery in the COVID-19 Era: A Multidisciplinary Academic Aesthetic Center Perspective

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Introduction

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic many plastic surgeons, particularly those focusing on aesthetic surgery, faced a great deal of financial uncertainty as elective surgeries were halted and clinics were forced to close their doors. When elective operations gradually resumed in early summer 2020 practices adapted to adhere to ever-evolving safety standards to protect patients and staff.



As the year progressed our multidisciplinary academic-affiliated aesthetic clinic observed an notable uptick in aesthetic consults and procedures scheduled. We sought to quantify the trend that had been anecdotally observed at our institution and compare our experience with that of similar practices across the U.S.

Methods

Data was collected on the total number of visits and number of new patient visits for aesthetic procedures at our multidisciplinary academic-affiliated aesthetic center for the two months prior to and the two months following pandemic-related shut downs.

CPT codes were identified for breast augmentation, suction assisted lipectomy, blepharoplasty, rhinoplasty, and facelift, the top five most frequently performed aesthetic procedures as defined by the 2019 Plastic Surgery Statistics Report from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. A search of these codes was performed in the Accrual to Clinical Trials (ACT) Network. Complete data was available for 30 academic institutions. The average number of these procedures performed per month in 2020, taking into account the two month pause in elective procedures, was compared to the average number performed in 2019 at each institution.

Conclusions

Despite concerns in the early days of the pandemic many plastic surgery practices have seen an increase in demand for aesthetic procedures. Data from our institution suggests that numbers of aesthetic visits had nearly returned to pre-pandemic numbers within the first two months of resuming elective care. We have shown that academic aesthetic surgery practices have come close to matching and in some cases surpassed their pre-pandemic numbers.

Results

The number of visits at our institution are demonstrated in Figure 1. The average number of procedures decreased by 6 procedures per month from 2019 to 2020 across the 30 institutions included. Nine of 30 institutions showed an increase in the average number of procedures performed per month. Our center showed an increase of 4% in the number of procedures per month.



Figure 1: Number of total visits and new patient visits per month two months before and two months after clinic closures