Transforming misconceptions

Many potential patients are intrigued by facial aesthetics have been put off by horror stories in the press, but are likely to relax and consider a treatment plan if things are fully explained, says Bob Khanna.

Consumers are becoming more and more aware of what is going on in the world of facial aesthetics. The sheer amount of information available means there are now millions of patients around the country who feel they are ‘specialists’ in the field, despite the fact none of them have ever picked up a syringe, or are ever likely to.

It can be frustrating when a patient enters your surgery and appears to know all there is to know about the treatment you are about to carry out, simply from reading something in Heat magazine about the latest treatment a celebrity has had. I understand that people are keen to research the treatment they are about to undergo, however, the media only ever seems to write about non-evidence based procedures and the horror stories – neither of which are necessarily the best information to base one’s beliefs on.

Negative impact

If people come to my clinics, having read countless horror stories in the press in the run up to their appointment, they are often nervous and uncommunicative, with their mind full of negative preconceptions. It is then very difficult for them to absorb any positive suggestions that my staff or I might make, and they may leave the clinic having not got the best out of their visit.

Having said that, some patients are very well informed, and have obviously spent a lot of time and effort finding out all they can about the procedure they are planning to embark on, although unfortunately, they are in the minority.

As a practitioner, I feel that it is my responsibility to fully explain the treatment options available to each individual patient. Every face is unique, so it is impossible to suggest that a standard treatment can be performed in order to relate every concern. For example, even if you have two patients who want a treatment to smooth out crow’s feet, you may not necessarily suggest you perform the exact same procedure. Other factors may have to be considered, and it is the rule of the professional to explain this fully to the patient.

Open to suggestions

Fortunately, I find that regardless of how informed they are, most patients welcome new and exciting suggestions. People enter my clinics wanting to leave feeling relaxed and refreshed, but are not sure how best to go about it. I am usually able to offer them a treatment plan designed to give them the final effect they desire, but maybe not using the processes that they were expecting. Technology in this field is moving so fast, I can often suggest new and exciting evidence-based methods to patients they haven’t even heard about yet.

If people are educated in the correct way, a little bit of background knowledge can be a distinct advantage. However, it entirely depends how and from whom the patient has received the education.

If people are educated in the correct way, a little bit of background knowledge can be a distinct advantage. However, it entirely depends how and from whom the patient has received the education. The fact that these new and exciting treatments are more publicised in the press, both trade and consumer, means not only are the patients themselves more aware of the treatments, but their GPs and dentists are also kept more in the loop – meaning referrals are more and more commonplace.

The numerous articles in the press and on websites dedicated to speculating who’s had what done, and television programmes such as Ten Years Younger are making the public more aware of facial aesthetic treatment than ever before. However, word of mouth remains one of the most effective tools for spreading information.

Now that treatment has become commonplace, most people know someone who has had a facial aesthetic treatment. It is human nature to be fascinated by something like this, and I see a lot of patients who enquire having seen a friend who has had treatment. Most patients are surprised at the natural look that can be attained, and are keen to see what they could achieve.

About the author

Dr Bob Khanna is widely regarded as one of the world’s leading exemplars of dentistry and facial aesthetics. President and founder of multiple organisations, the International Academy for Advanced Facial Aesthetics (IAAFA), Dr Khanna heads the only UK organisation to combine medical and dental professionals. He is the appointed clinical tutor in facial aesthetics at the Royal College of Surgeons and has trained thousands of dentists and doctors through the Dr Bob Khanna Training Institute.