

Aesthetic Surgery Journal

<http://aes.sagepub.com/>

Cosmetic Plastic Surgery Training in the United Kingdom

Joseph George and Beryl De Souza
Aesthetic Surgery Journal 2011 31: 982
DOI: 10.1177/1090820X11421892

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://aes.sagepub.com/content/31/8/982>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery](http://www.asap.org)

Additional services and information for *Aesthetic Surgery Journal* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://aes.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://aes.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Nov 7, 2011

[What is This?](#)

Cosmetic Surgery Training in the United Kingdom

Joseph George; and Beryl De Souza, MD, BSc(Hons), MBBS, MPhil, FRCS

Aesthetic Surgery Journal
31(8) 982–983
© 2011 The American Society for
Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, Inc.
Reprints and permission:
[http://www.sagepub.com/
journalsPermissions.nav](http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav)
DOI: 10.1177/1090820X11421892
www.aestheticsurgeryjournal.com



To an average uninitiated UK medical student thrown headlong into the world of hospital medicine, the world of plastic surgery might seem to belong to pinstriped glory-hunters seeking financial rewards, if his or her experience of the specialty is derived solely from popular mass media. One certainly hopes that this perception would drastically change by the time that the student completes three years in clinical medicine, but without proper training, this isn't always the case.

Knowledge of our specialty is important to any surgical trainee, as it deals with the science and art of wound healing. The basic principles of wound healing and aesthetics are useful for all specialties, not just cosmetic surgery. Appropriate understanding of the plastic surgeon's role allows for more effective referrals to the department of plastic surgery. In addition, the surgical management of skin cancers is undertaken by plastic surgeons in collaboration with their dermatology colleagues, so establishing a cooperative relationship during training is essential.

Exposure to our specialty in medical school can be instrumental in allowing students to make an informed choice in terms of their career path. Inspiring mentors can attract students, and contact with plastic surgeon role models can go a long way toward encouraging students in a particular specialty. Medical students can then direct their extracurricular efforts to their specialty of choice.

Green and May,¹ in their survey of plastic surgery residency applicants, concluded that exposure to the specialty during training was the most influential factor in helping medical students decide to embark on a career in plastic surgery. They also emphasized the importance of having this exposure before the third year of medical school. In the United Kingdom, the time spent in surgical training has been shortened as a result of the European Working Time Directive and the Modernising Medical Careers reforms, so it has become particularly advantageous for trainees to make an early choice of career pathway, even during medical school.

To address the shortcomings in the undergraduate courses, student-led surgical societies in the United Kingdom regularly conduct practical workshops and lecture-based

tutorials for the benefit of their undergraduate members. For example, Imperial College School of Medicine Surgical Society offers "Basic Surgical Skills for Medical Students," a series of practical workshops in plastic surgery techniques taught by plastic surgery trainees and well-recognized lecturers. The thrill of learning suturing methods and performing basic flaps and Z-plasties on animal skin is a major attraction for many. The society is also offering, on a trial basis, weekend seminars on underexposed surgical specialties (eg, plastic surgery). These programs provide students with time in the operating theater when the weekend teams are on call. The British Association of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons also supports students undertaking research or electives in plastic surgery through their "elective awards."

Although such adjunct programs are important in furthering the specialty, it is incumbent upon medical schools to educate students about all potential specialties and subspecialties, including plastic surgery. Some schools are fulfilling that duty; Imperial College London offers three-week optional special study modules in plastic surgery (hand surgery and craniofacial surgery). Granick et al² discussed the need for required clinical clerkships in American schools, which has led to an improvement in student awareness of plastic surgery in the United States. However, more can be done in both the United Kingdom and the United States by way of incorporating plastic surgery rotations within the curriculum as a starting point. As

Mr. George is a final-year medical student at Imperial Medical School, London, United Kingdom. Dr. De Souza is Plastic Surgery Registrar (Selected Study Module tutor) in the Department of Plastic Surgery, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London, United Kingdom.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. De Souza, Department of Plastic Surgery, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, 369 Fulham Road, London, Greater London, SW10 9NH.
E-mail: bds@dr.com

plastic surgeons, we must be the ambassadors of our specialty, encouraging medical students to explore the world of cosmetic surgery and supporting them as they make informed choices in their surgical careers.

Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

REFERENCES

1. Greene AK, May JW Jr. Integrated plastic surgery residency applicant survey: characteristics of successful applicants and feedback about the interview process. *Plast Reconstr Surg* 2008;121:1049-1053.
2. Granick MS, Blair PG, Sachdeva AK. A new educational role for plastic surgery in the fourth year of medical school. *Plast Reconstr Surg* 1999;103:1523-1528.