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Florida Gets Kudos on Patient Safety

By David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS

It's exciting and it can be transformative...but is it safe? In the vast majority of cases, cosmetic surgery procedures pose minimal risks. Risks common to all surgical procedures can occur--bleeding, infection and unfavorable scar tissue formation.

But Florida residents have the benefit of a very watchful State Board of Medicine. It's so watchful and proactive that the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery recently publically applauded its efforts. The ASAPS commended the Florida Board's disciplinary action of a family physician accused of allowing unlicensed medical assistants to perform liposuction. It was the second recent major disciplinary action by the Board involving inadequate cosmetic surgery training.

Here's what the ASAPS said: "Liposuction is a surgical procedure that should only be performed by a trained, properly-credentialed medical professional. Allowing unlicensed or unqualified personnel to perform this type of surgical procedure is a serious breach of patient safety. The recent actions taken by the Florida Board of Medicine send a clear message that this type of compromise to patient safety will not be tolerated."

ASAPS urges all consumers considering plastic surgery to have their procedures performed under the care of properly credentialed and trained medical professionals. A doctor's board-certification is the best indicator of his or her expertise in a particular medical or surgical specialty. ASAPS advises patients to select surgeons certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS), the only Board recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) that certifies doctors in the specialty of plastic surgery, and to avoid those whose liposuction training is based only on the completion of a brief, weekend course. It pays to ask questions.

Patients should also be wary of physicians offering "deep discount" procedures, or those offering surgical procedures in non-clinical settings, such as medi-spas, the ASAPS noted. More information on how to check surgeon credentials can be found on the ASAPS website, www.surgery.org.

Liposuction is the second most popular surgical cosmetic procedure in the U.S. While the ASAPS pronouncement related to liposuction, it's good advice for any type of cosmetic procedure: carefully check the certifications, credentials, experience and references of anyone who proposes to provide any sort of invasive procedure, including injections, lasers and surgery. Better safe than sorry. #

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