

(Parkland Life Column for September 2011)

**The Real Housewives of New York City Know What Questions to Ask
When Looking for a Plastic Surgeon**

The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) applauds Ramona Singer, one of the 'Real Housewives of New York City', for emphasizing the importance of choosing a board certified plastic an episode of the reality show. On the 9th episode of Season three titled "Stay on Message," she takes her friend to her plastic surgery consultation to help her ask the surgeon necessary questions about her lipoplasty (liposuction) procedure.

During the consultation, Ramona asks the surgeon if he had operating privileges at a hospital to perform the procedure in question, what year he was board certified in, and if he is a member of ASAPS.

ASPS, the only national organization of board-certified plastic surgeons specializing in cosmetic surgery, applauds the questions and suggests that other people considering plastic surgery ask the same questions during their consultations and bring along their spouse, partner or a friend to help with asking all the questions and remembering the answers!

Other important questions:

- A doctor's board-certification is the best indicator of his or her training in a particular medical or surgical specialty. Look for certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS), the only Board recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) to certify doctors in the specialty of plastic surgery.
- ASAPS membership ensures that a doctor not only is ABPS but also has significant experience in cosmetic surgery. ASAPS membership is by invitation only.
- Cosmetic surgery can safely be performed in a hospital, a surgicenter or an office-based surgical facility. Accredited office-based facilities have a safety record comparable to that of hospital ambulatory surgery settings. However, the

majority of office-based surgical facilities are not accredited. ASAPs members, for whom safety is a number one priority, are expected to operate in accredited, state-licensed or Medicare-certified facilities.

- Before granting operating privileges, hospital review committees evaluate a surgeon's training and competency for specific procedures. Wherever the surgery will be performed, be sure that the surgeon has operating privileges in an accredited hospital for the same procedure being considered.
- Asking a patient's primary care doctor for recommendations is a good place to start, and friends may offer suggestions; but the surgeon's board-certification should always be verified independently by contacting the American Board of Plastic Surgery (www.abplsurg.org). Free referral information to board-certified plastic surgeons with significant experience in cosmetic surgery and extensive information on all cosmetic procedures can be found on the ASAPs site (www.surgery.org).

When you have a cosmetic surgery procedure, you will spend a good amount of time with the doctor and his staff both before and after surgery. So it's extremely important that you feel a strong rapport with the surgeon, that you feel he or she has been honest and straightforward about the results you can expect, that you are comfortable asking questions and that he or she responds in a way your readily understand. The same goes for the doctor's staff who will ideally act as your cheerleaders and support system throughout the surgical and recovery periods.

David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS, in practice in Coral Springs for 22 years, a graduate of Columbia University-College of Physicians and Surgeons and certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. A member of ASAPs, he was named a Top Doctor in Castle Connolly's national ratings for 2010 and 2011. 954-752-1020. www.DrLevens.com.