

"Selfie" Surgery

The growing trend has plastic and reconstructive surgeons cautioning patients

We've all been there.

Wanting to quickly hit the delete button on that cell phone photo we took of ourselves that doesn't quite show us looking our best. However, it appears that for some the critical assessment of their image has gone beyond blaming bad lighting or windblown hair.

A recent study by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery shows that "selfie awareness" is promoting people to seek out cosmetic procedures. According to the study, 2017 saw 55 percent of patients advising their facial plastic surgeons that their desired outcome was to look better in a selfie.

Dr. Pedro Rodriguez, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center, in Rockford, has experienced it firsthand.

"Not only feeling like they need plastic surgery because of the way they look on their selfies, actually editing the pictures themselves through different filters, through Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook," says Dr. Pedro Rodriguez, plastic and reconstructive surgeon at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "They actually edit the filters, use different filters to edit the pictures and ask if this is possible. And if it's not possible, how close to it can we get?"

While understanding a person's desire of wanting to feel good about themselves, Dr. Rodriguez warns that cell phone photo filters do not portray a realistic look. He says it's never for him to judge, but he always has a thorough discussion with the patient.

"But 100 percent, the whole purpose of our office is, in that particular situation, to educate our patients," says Dr. Rodriguez. "To let them understand that their features and what they want to achieve may not be realistic. And, if it's not realistic, what other avenues they have in terms of possibility and what procedures we can perform, either invasive or noninvasive, to achieve what they want to achieve."

Dr. Rodriguez's best advice is not to let a filtered photo be your sole guide to perceiving your true image. He also emphasizes people do their homework when choosing a plastic and reconstructive surgeon.

"In 2017, the guidelines of plastic surgery were focusing on how the plastic surgeons portray themselves on the internet," says Dr. Rodriguez. "And the biggest problem with that has come from cosmetic surgeons, which are not board certified plastic surgeons, and edit and alter the facial features and body features of the results to portray something that might not be attainable."

Dr. Rodriguez does not think "selfie" surgery is purely a question of vanity. He says by changing one's outward appearance – something that may appear trivial to others - surgeons can change a person's self-esteem and attitude on life.