



YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

As patients get younger, cosmetic procedures get more patient-friendly.
Two doctors tell Gentry what's new.

TEXT BY ALICE KAUFMAN

One morning on his radio program on KNBR, Gary Radnich was discussing the abrupt and surprising resignation of Danny Ainge as coach of the Phoenix Suns basketball team. Ainge had told the press he wanted to spend more time with his family. "When I hear a guy is taking time off to be with his family," Gary said, "I think face lift."

Maybe so. But at his age (Ainge looks to be in his 40s), thanks to new advances in cosmetic surgery and cosmetic dermatology, if Ainge was planning to "have a little work done," he probably wouldn't need to disappear from the public eye for very long, and he wouldn't have to opt for a full face lift. Younger candidates--that is people in their 30s and 40s who feel they need something, even if they're not sure what it is they need--can now take advantage of the newest developments in the art and science of aesthetic surgery and cosmetic dermatology.

To explore some of these new developments, Gentry talked to two physicians, a surgeon and a dermatologist. We asked San Francisco plastic surgeon Dr. John Owsley to explain the difference between the two specialties. "There's a considerable overlap," he answered. But, in general, Dr. Owsley says, patients who have skin quality problems should consult a cosmetic dermatologist. "Surgeons," he says, "contend with the problems relating to aging, with changes of laxity, with a change in the contour of the skin."

But even though he deals with the problems of aging, Dr. Owsley says, "I've noticed in the last few years that I'm seeing an increase in younger patients, especially women who work in technology in Silicon Valley. One of the best ways I've found to explain what's happening to their faces is to give a power point lecture on a laptop illustrating what is happening to them and what they can expect."

Using images taken from magazine articles about him and his lectures, Dr. Owsley first shows the anatomy of a young face, and then shows when and how change begins and progresses. As the images--and the years--go by, jowls start to appear, droopiness develops under the chin, and then, a little later, change comes to the middle of the face. "These illustrations help them understand. Of course, different people age at different ages, but I'm seeing patients now who are 35."

Dr. Rick Noodleman, Campbell-based cosmetic dermatologist, also finds his patients are getting younger. "I'm seeing both younger people," he says, "and people of any age who don't want to go through a week or more of healing or swelling."

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Both doctors Owsley and Noodleman can offer their patients an impressive menu of up-to-the-minute techniques, procedures and products. One of Dr. Owsley's solutions is the proportional face lift. "We do no more than is necessary," he says, "but no less than is needed to solve the problem." Another possibility is what Dr. Owsley calls the "mini-SMAS," a unique procedure involving the neck and chin (Dr. Owsley is the originator of the SMAS-platysma bi-directional--deep layer or muscle-face lift, which revolutionized face lift surgery.) "By freeing the SMAS muscle in the cheek," Dr. Owsley says, "we can get an upward lift, which you can't achieve by pulling the skin." These proportional procedures especially appeal to younger patients, Owsley says. "By focusing just on the areas that need attention, my younger patients seem to find cosmetic surgery easier to reconcile."

One of Dr. Noodleman's suggestions for younger patients whose skin is beginning to show damage from age and from the sun is a new, non-laser pulse light technology called FacialLite that utilizes intense repetitive flashes of light similar to a strobe light to improve the health and look of the skin. "Each flash of light," Dr. Noodleman says, "targets a selected problem area below the skin, but leaves the surface alone." Which, for patients, translates to no burned or crusty skin.

Dr. Noodleman says FacialLite can smooth blotchy skin, open pores and target dilated capillaries that cause the face and neck to appear flushed or red. "In just 20 minutes," he says, "patients can rejuvenate lifeless skin cells that promote wrinkles and remove signs of flushing or redness, without requiring anesthesia or any recovery time."

Dr. Noodleman, with the help of his colleague, Dr. David Harris, also developed the laser peel to solve problems for which conventional laser resurfacing is too aggressive. Treatments may be done on the entire face or just in problem areas.

The "Weekend Neck-Lift" is another Noodleman innovation (Bill Bradley, are you listening?). Meant for people in their 30s and 40s who neither need nor want a full face lift, using local anesthesia, Dr. Noodleman can tighten and reshape the skin and lower face. Recovery time is minimal, and patients can usually return to their normal routines in two days.

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Both doctors have their own line of skin products which are meant to be used before and after any procedures, but which can benefit even people who do not have medical treatment. Dr. Owsley's Face Forward line promotes exfoliation, and glycolic acid is a mainstay of the Face Forward products. The line is a collaboration between Dr. Owsley and a Florida cosmetic dermatologist. "She had a number of good products that I liked," he says, "and I talked to her about designing products specifically for my patients. Ever since I've been a plastic surgeon, my patients have asked me what to use to maintain their appearance. When my wife, Sharon, started to use exfoliating skin products combined with moisturizers, I could see the difference." Face Forward products include cleanser, unbuffered glycolic gel, AHA exfoliating toner, a remarkably luxurious pre-moisturizer called lipid drops and SPF15 tinted moisturizer.

At Dr. Owsley's Face Forward Skin Clinic, patients can augment and complement their skin care regimen with a selection of skin rejuvenating treatments, including a glycolic wash, a Vienna skin polish and deep pore cleansing. The clinic also offers a line of corrective concealing makeup for post-operative patients.

As this story was being written, Dr. Noodleman was just completing work on his own line of skin care products. By the time the story appears, the products should be available at Age-Defying Dermatology, Dr. Noodleman's practice in Campbell. Called Revercel, the line includes what Dr. Noodleman describes as state-of-the-art 30 SPF sunscreen, physician-strength Vitamin C cream, 20 percent alpha hydroxy cream, toners with glycolic acid and "an elegant cleanser."

We'll probably never know whether or not Danny Ainge had cosmetic surgery although he is back in the public eye, commenting on basketball on TNT, and he looks good. Isn't it comforting to know that with today's medical technologies and a skillful doctor, if you chose to "have a little work done," no one will know whether or not you did.

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