



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
PLASTIC SURGEONS*

ASPS Cautions Plastic Surgery Patients to Approach Holiday Medical Tourism with Vigilance

Consumers can assess the training, credentials of plastic surgeons with ASPS Find-a-Surgeon tool

Arlington Heights, Ill. (November 14, 2012) – The busiest travel season of the year is approaching, with many people headed to tropical locales, but plastic surgery patients need to know who is performing their surgery before traveling abroad. The [American Society of Plastic Surgeons](#) (ASPS) cautions that while inexpensive vacation packages that include cosmetic surgery may sound appealing, it may be difficult to assess the training and credentials of surgeons outside the United States.

“It is a significant patient safety concern when consumers are having major surgical procedures performed by unqualified practitioners,” said Dr. Gregory Evans, president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. “There are no U.S. laws that protect patients or mandate the training and qualifications of physicians who perform plastic surgery outside of the U.S. There may be no legal recourse if surgical negligence by the physician or institution occurs.”

This warning comes on the heels of a [new survey](#) from global market research company Ipsos on behalf of [Reuters News](#). The survey shows one in five people “definitely would consider traveling to another country to receive medical or dental care if the cost were significantly lower than in their country.”

“All too often we see patients who think they will enjoy a vacation following plastic surgery abroad only to end up paying dearly for the surgeon’s lack of training and expertise,” Evans said. “These patients end up paying more in revision surgeries and time off work than if they had paid a bit more to see someone who was qualified to perform the procedure. The ASPS Find-a-Surgeon tool is an invaluable resource to patient’s looking to have plastic surgery.”

The ASPS [Find-a-Surgeon](#) tool allows consumers to search for qualified plastic surgeons in the U.S. and around the world. All plastic surgeons in the Find-a-Surgeon database have completed extensive surgical training, including plastic surgery, and adhere to a strict code of ethics, among other requirements.

Consider the following when evaluating whether medical tourism is for you:

- **Vacation-related activities may compromise patients' health.** Although enticing, vacation activities should be avoided after surgery. Rest is required to properly heal and to reduce the possibility of complications.
- **Cosmetic surgery is real surgery.** At the highest level of care, every surgery, including cosmetic surgery, has some risks. Infections are the most common complication seen in patients that go abroad for cosmetic surgery.
- **Travel combined with surgery significantly increases risk of complications.** Individually, long flights or surgery can increase the potential risk of developing pulmonary embolism and blood clots. Traveling combined with surgery further increase the risk of developing these potentially fatal complications, in addition to, swelling and infection.
- **Quality critical care facilities are not always available.** In the event that an unanticipated complication should occur, a critical care facility equivalent to U.S. standards should be accessible. Such facilities are costly to operate and are frequently unavailable in locations that offer heavily discounted plastic surgery.
- **Follow-up care and monitoring may be limited.** Follow-up care and monitoring is an important part of any surgery. Cosmetic surgery vacation packages provide limited follow-up care, if any, once the patient returns to the United States. Patients who travel outside the U.S. for cosmetic surgery and experience a complication may find it hard to locate a qualified plastic surgeon to treat the problem or to provide revision surgeries. Local doctors may not know what surgical techniques the physician used in the initial operation, making treatment difficult or nearly impossible. Revision surgeries can be more complicated than the initial operation and patients rarely get the desired results.
- **Bargain surgery can be costly.** Patients can incur additional costs for revision surgeries and complications that may total more than the cost of the initial operation if originally performed in the U.S.
- **Surgeon and facility qualifications may not be verifiable.** In order for cosmetic surgery to be performed safely, it requires the proper administration of anesthesia, sterile technique, modern instrumentation and equipment, as well as properly trained surgeons. Vacation destinations may not have formal medical accreditation boards to certify physicians or

medical facilities. Many facilities are privately owned and operated, making it difficult to check the credentials of surgeons, anesthesiologists and other medical personnel.

- **Devices and products used may not meet U.S. standards.** Cosmetic surgery products or devices used in other countries may not have been tested, proven safe and effective, or been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). For example, an implant used in the U.S. must meet standards of safety and effectiveness, a process regulated by the FDA. Other countries may not have similar regulations.

More information about medical tourism can be found at www.plasticsurgery.org. Referrals for international plastic surgeons can be found here: http://www1.plasticsurgery.org/find_a_surgeon/.

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About ASPS

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) is the world's largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons. Representing more than 7,000 Member Surgeons, the Society is recognized as a leading authority and information source on aesthetic and reconstructive plastic surgery. ASPS comprises more than 94 percent of all board-certified plastic surgeons in the United States. Founded in 1931, the Society represents physicians certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. ASPS advances quality care to plastic surgery patients by encouraging high standards of training, ethics, physician practice and research in plastic surgery. You can learn more and visit the American Society of Plastic Surgeons at PlasticSurgery.org or Facebook.com/PlasticSurgeryASPS and Twitter.com/ASPS_news.