

Selfie-culture is changing the way people talk to their doctors about plastic surgery

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Selfie culture — along with its many filters — is changing the way people decide what kind of cosmetic changes they want to make to their faces.

The popularity of selfies has been on the rise for years. In fact, in 2013, the word selfie was named by Oxford Dictionaries as word of the year.

Social media applications promote selfie culture because of the ease at which anyone can take a photo of themselves and post it online.

Some filters give you animal ears, while others make your skin

look clearer, your eyes look bigger or your face look thinner.

Dr. Kristina Zakhary is a Calgary nasal and facial surgeon. She says selfies, even without a filter, can distort your image.

She points to a study that appeared in the March edition of JAMA Facial Plastic Surgery, a bimonthly medical journal.

"[It] showed that the nose can look up to 30 per cent larger in a selfie because of the proximity of the camera to your face," she said.

The doctor says that the most common rhinoplasty surgery requests, for example, are changing.

"In the past, rhinoplasty patients were coming looking for changes in reducing a dorsal hump — so a bump on the bridge of the nose — making a crooked nose more midline, or narrowing a nose," she said.

"These are very acceptable changes to make because they're noticeable and they can really negatively impact somebody's self-confidence."

Zakhary says that now when clients come into her office, they're no longer asking for those kinds of changes — or requests for Jennifer Aniston's nose and Scarlett Johansson's lips.

Instead, they're asking if they can look like what they see after they've applied filters to their own images.

"That has really changed the landscape of the consultation because before when a patient would come in for a consultation, we would hand them a mirror and say take a look at yourself in the mirror and point to me what you'd like to change," she said.

"And now maybe one out of 10 consults will get frustrated with that, put the mirror down and say, 'you can't really see it in the mirror, here let me show you in a picture and you can see better in the picture.'"

Because of this, Zakhary says it's the job of a moral and ethical surgeon to inform their clients about what's realistic, and what can only be achieved using a filter.

To prevent any unrealistic expectations, Zakhary's office pre-screens clients over the phone, she says.

"I like to have patients who are well informed, who have good motivations for coming in for surgery, notably people who have had a longstanding desire for surgery that is self-motivated and that is a noticeable issue," she said.

But the doctor says not all aspects of social media and selfie culture are bad. In some ways, it's opened up the door for candid and positive conversations about plastic surgery and

self-confidence.

Meaghan Killoran, 25, works in the beauty industry. She says social media plays a big role in her life — and has helped her decide what cosmetic procedures she wants.

"I think as I saw girls getting it done and it became more acceptable to get it done, I wasn't afraid to do it. It was something I always wanted to do," she said.

Killoran has had lip fillers, Botox and a brow lift.

"In the beginning, I was always so worried about somebody noticing that I had gotten my lips done or that I had done something," she said.

"I didn't realize that I was becoming a part of that trend with my social media following as well, that when I did it I actually opened up the door for other people to do it and ask questions about it. So I think other people definitely had an influence on me feeling comfortable doing it."

But Killoran admits that there was a time when she'd realized she'd gone too far.

She said that after getting lip fillers, a selfie of hers surprised her — and she didn't like what she saw.

Killoran said it prompted her to have some of her lip fillers

dissolved, and she's much happier with it now.

She wants to remind people that no matter what you see on social media, it's curated and people only post the things they want you to see.

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