



total body

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Dr Nettle being filmed performing procedures

the tv makeoover

Lise Petersen spoke with Sydney plastic surgeon **Dr Warwick Nettle** about what he considers the pros and cons of surgeons performing procedures on television.

With the current crop of television programs on cosmetic surgery going to air, 'extreme makeovers' are a fairly hot topic with the general public. 'I believe the current increasing coverage of cosmetic surgery in the media is a positive thing,' says Sydney plastic surgeon Dr Warwick Nettle. 'It reflects what is happening in society today, which is that cosmetic surgery is becoming more commonly practised and more acceptable within Australian society. This level of acceptance is evidenced in that even different generations within families are taking part in television programs. On a Channel Nine show I am involved with, for example, two patients of mine – a mother and her daughter – are both having rhinoplasties, with the mum having a facelift and her eyelids done as well.'

Dr Nettle explains that, from a surgeon's point of view, there are a number of key pros and cons associated with

involvement in televising cosmetic surgery procedures. The main positive element is in the exposure the surgeon receives. 'You could be the best surgeon in Australia but there is no point if no-one knows you are around,' he says. 'Television is a highly effective way to get your work known, mainly because it reaches such a wide audience.'

This is certainly true for Dr Nettle. He has been involved with two Australian cosmetic surgery programs, one for the Seven Network and the other for Channel Nine. His work has also been covered on *A Current Affair*, *Good Medicine*, on Asian cable television and on the *Discovery Channel*; the latter having the widest reach.

This broad coverage means Dr Nettle has patients flying in from much of Asia (Indonesia, Vietnam, Hong Kong) plus New Zealand, the UK, the US, Germany and Spain for surgery. He has even operated on Academy Award and

Golden Globe winners. 'The average surgeon in Australia doesn't get this sort of exposure,' he says.

When it comes to the negatives for surgeons involved in performing cosmetic surgery procedures on television, two stand out: the pressure of not being in control and the risk of bad outcomes.

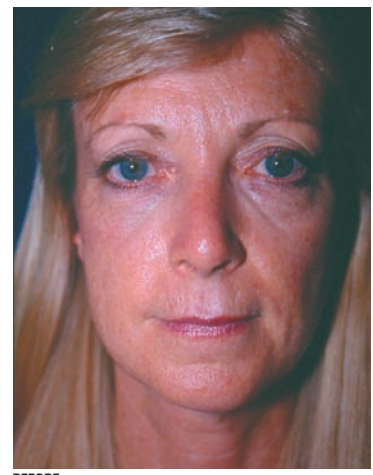
'Working for television is stressful,' Dr Nettle says, 'because there is so much variability that surgeons have no control over – not in terms of the surgery itself but in terms of the expectations.'

He says surgeons need to consider whether there will be enough time for patients to fully recover (some patients take longer than others), whether a recovery time that gives the optimal result will fit into the program's timetable (for example a rhinoplasty keeps evolving for over a year) and what patients will say about the outcome (there is no coaching or influence). Operations also take an increased amount of time because filming requires elements to be demonstrated again and again, and all of this is done in front of cameras.

'The bottom line is that surgeons need to be very confident about their abilities to be involved in performing procedures on television,' Dr Nettle says. 'A surgeon's results need to be consistently good because the camera doesn't lie. This means that if a surgeon will only get four out of 10 good rhinoplasty results, for example, they may not want to appear on television. They need be confident that their results are good. Surgeons have no power of veto on television. What you see is what you get.'

Another issue is finding patients who are willing to appear on television, as not everyone is open to this sort of exposure. Patients can be assured that when seeing a surgeon, complete confidentiality is guaranteed and if surgeons would like them to be involved in any media coverage then they must always obtain the patient's written permission beforehand.

'Surgeons need to be prepared for the pressures of not being in control, be confident in their work and be able to produce consistently good results to be successful on television,' Dr Nettle concludes. 'If so, then it is the ideal vehicle for promotion.' **acsm**



BEFORE



AFTER facelift, upper and lower eyelid surgery, periorbital fat transfer and lower lid resurfacing by Dr Nettle

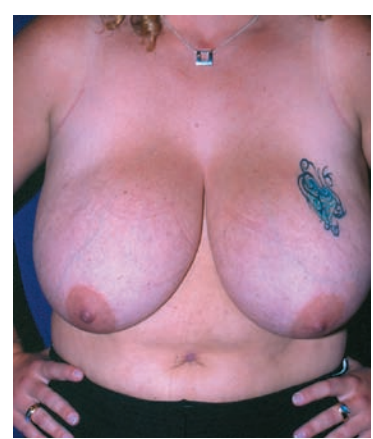


BEFORE



AFTER rhinoplasty by Dr Nettle

I'd never liked my nose. It was really pointy and too big for my face. So when Dr Nettle asked if I was interested in appearing on television, I was keen – if nervous. It was a strange experience but fun, especially because the crew were so friendly. I was a bit scared at first but the surgery was well worth it. Now my nose is just right, my profile is much better and I feel great. It doesn't look at all artificial either. Dr Nettle did a great job and I'd do the whole thing again any day. **Fabiana, 33**



BEFORE



AFTER breast reduction by Dr Nettle

My breasts had always been a hindrance to me. They were so big they felt uncomfortable and made sport and my work as a personal trainer difficult. Now I've had the reduction, I feel so free plus it's helped me get to the next level of fitness that I wanted to achieve. The television experience was something out of the ordinary, too. It was fun to do and everyone really looked after me. I'm very pleased with the end result. **Anne-Marie, 33**