

Is Selfie a New Cause of Increasing Rhinoplasties?

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Abstract

The digital world and social media are becoming increasingly important. Social media connect people together in a visual manner. Profile photographs are required by most social networking sites. A trend toward the increasing popularity of selfies on social media has rendered people more aware of their appearance. A selfie is a *photograph* that one takes of oneself, usually employing a *smartphone* or *webcam*, which is then shared on *social media*. Thus, the demand for aesthetic procedures correcting imperfections such as a prominent nose has increased, for which the technique is a rhinoplasty. Patients with reasonable expectations, treated by skilled surgeons, are usually very happy with the results. Rhinoplasty does not cure low self-esteem, but does correct more visible imperfections of the face. Although some hope that a rhinoplasty will resolve many unwanted facial features besides nose problems, it can only change the size and shape of the nose, improving its form. However, in the age of the selfie, everyone wants to look better. Self-consciousness is increasing, as are concerns over grooming and appearance at work and social events. These issues have become more important in recent years with the increase in selfie-taking; people are now more aware of how their nose appears to others. In this review, we discuss whether selfie-taking has triggered a rise in rhinoplasties along with a detailed survey of the literature.

Keywords

- selfie-taking
- rhinoplasty
- social media
- “perfect” nose
- smartphone

The digital world is becoming increasingly important; almost all people in developed countries use social media. Smartphones and digital cameras are extremely common. Millions of images are shared daily on Facebook and Instagram.¹ Social media can be very useful, and it may be enjoyable to establish a profile and post photographs. However, extensive self-scrutiny may pose problems, leading to issues with self-esteem and confidence in one's appearance.¹

Many patients (mostly aged 16–36 years) bring selfies to their plastic surgeons to explain where they think improvements might be made. They explore angles at which the nose appears at its best. Surprisingly, some patients actually find the best angle; others distort their appearance to render their noses more attractive.² During preoperative evaluation of

rhinoplasty cases, we frequently encounter patients with facial asymmetry. When, in the past, patients were told of this, they reacted with disappointment and sorrow; they were usually unaware of the problem. However, many young patients are now aware of problems (in terms of asymmetry) with their noses and faces. Before the advent of selfies, the main complaint was a hump of the dorsum. Intensive self-evaluation of facial photographs thus appears to be the principal reason why the number of rhinoplasties is increasing.

Social media connect people together on visual, virtual platforms; to some, such media are becoming more real than the real world. Profile photographs are required by most social networking sites and some people feel under

tremendous pressure to post great pictures. Everybody wants to post a photograph in which they look perfect (perhaps even better than in real life). Then, of course, photographs must be regularly updated to conform to fashion trends and the season. Thus, many have started to evaluate their faces in detail. Social media and the selfie culture encourage a focus on appearance; today's interactions are extremely visual. Not only are young men and women aware that everyone is constantly looking at their photographs, but they themselves take and study selfies. Suddenly, flaws seem magnified and the need for procedures like *nasal surgery* more pressing.³

First impressions have always been important, but, today, such impressions are likely to be made on social media, and the selfie has proliferated to an extent that was previously un contemplated.⁴ People nowadays see themselves from all angles, and many are not pleased with what they discern in selfies and other photographs. Photograph manipulation, including the choice of a flattering angle and appropriate filters, and the use of other tricks, can improve appearance, but such effects are not permanent. Some become dissatisfied with these tactics and turn to a more permanent solution, that is, *rhinoplasty*.¹

Lee and Sung⁵ found that narcissistic individuals were more likely to view selfie-posting favorably, to pay attention to feedback, and to study the selfies of others. However, narcissism did not modulate the relationship between how often one observed other selfies and the frequency of commenting on, or "liking," the selfies of others.

Between-Sex Differences in Facial Plastic Surgery Procedure Chosen

Men are most concerned with "wrinkles and having a full head of hair, while women value preservation of a youthful appearance" via "a facelift and eye lift, and a well-proportioned attractive nose." Among males, the most popular procedures are "neurotoxin injections to treat wrinkles, hyaluronic acid injections, hair transplants, and rhinoplasty."⁶

The most common cosmetic surgical procedures performed on women are facelifts and rhinoplasties (an average of 37 procedures of either type per surgeon), ablative skin resurfacing (36 procedures), and blepharoplasty (34 procedures). In 2013, neurotoxin injection to treat wrinkles was the most commonly performed nonsurgical procedure in women (348 procedures), followed by filler placements (187 procedures), superficial peels/microdermabrasions (119 procedures), and nonablative resurfacing (106 procedures).⁶

However, "rhinopopularity" still dominates the desires of either sex; "nose jobs" were the most requested surgical procedures by both men and women younger than 35 years (90 and 86%, respectively).⁶

Selfies

A selfie is a *photograph* that one takes of oneself, typically using a *smartphone* or a *webcam*, that is then shared via *social media*.⁷ Given the current obsession with selfies, many are

resorting to plastic surgery to fix imperfections including prominent noses, unacceptable wrinkles or curves, or hands that do not look perfect in Instagram photographs of wedding rings.⁴

Profile photographs are required by most social networking sites; there is tremendous pressure to post a really great picture. Then, of course, that photograph must be constantly updated. "Social media and the selfie culture" have shifted the focus of our interactions to a very visual level. Not only are young men and women aware that everyone is constantly looking at their photographs, but they themselves take and study selfies. Suddenly, flaws seem magnified and the need for procedures such as *nasal surgery* becomes more pressing³ (► Figs. 1 and 2).

The History of Selfies

The term "selfie" was coined by the photographer Jim Krause in 2005,⁸ although photographs in the selfie genre predate widespread use of the term. In the early 2000s, "before Facebook became the dominant online social network," "self-taken photographs were particularly common on MySpace." However, Kate Losse writes that, between 2006 and 2009, "an amateurish flash-blinded self-portrait, often taken in front of a bathroom mirror" became an indication of bad taste among users of the newer Facebook social network. Early Facebook portraits, in contrast, were usually well focused and more formal, taken by others from a distance. In 2009, "an image- and video-hosting website" used the term "selfies" to describe the seemingly endless self-portraits posted by teenage girls.⁹ According to Losse, improvements in smartphone design, especially the front-facing camera of the *iPhone 4* (2010), and the development of



Fig. 1 Selfie presents nasal profile. (Photograph is used with permission.)

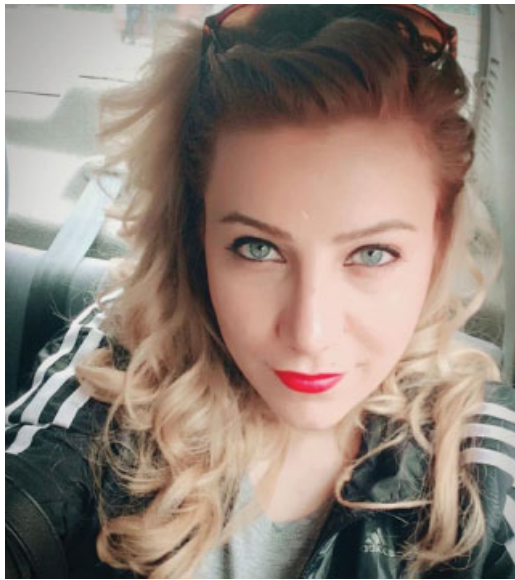


Fig. 2 On anterior view, Selfie shows the nose in detail. (Photograph is used with permission.)

mobile photograph applications such as Instagram and Snapchat triggered a selfie resurgence in the early 2010s.^{10,11}

Initially popular only with young people, “selfies gained wider popularity over time.”^{12,13} By the end of 2012, *Time* magazine considered “selfie” to be one of the “top 10 buzzwords” of the year. Thus, although selfies had already existed for a long time, it was in 2012 that the term “really hit the big time.”¹⁴ According to a 2013 survey, two-thirds of Australian women aged 18 to 35 years take selfies, most commonly to post on Facebook.¹³ A poll commissioned by “the smartphone- and camera-maker Samsung” found that “selfies constituted 30% of all photographs taken by people aged 18–24 years.”¹⁵ By 2013, the word “selfie” had become sufficiently commonplace to be monitored for possible inclusion in the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.¹⁶ In November 2013, the word “selfie” was awarded “word of the year” by the Oxford English Dictionary, which was of the view that the word was of Australian origin.^{11,17}

The Influence of Social Media

The trend toward increasing selfie popularity on social media has made people aware of their appearance to an extent unheard of just a few years ago. This focus (some might say obsession) on appearance “clearly stems from a desire to make a good impression on others.” Thus, many social media users seek cosmetic enhancement to enhance their status among their friends and connections; a sexy cleavage or pouty lips garner more “likes” and ReTweets.¹⁸

However, the associations among selfies, social media usage, and cosmetic surgery are potentially dangerous. First, teens who are too young to undergo cosmetic enhancement obsess about such enhancement. Things get worse. Earlier in 2016, responding to selfies of “the lips of the reality TV personality Kylie Jenner posted on social media, many teens

went to disturbing lengths to emulate their idol.” This started when, using the hashtag #KylieJennerLipChallenge, a social media user encouraged teens to place glasses over their lips for 5 minutes, the idea being to create a skin airlock that would plump the lips, rendering them just like Kylie’s. Unfortunately, this created bruised faces, burst blood vessels, and painful marks, thus not pouty lips. It remains unclear where this dangerous trend originated. However, “the hashtag spread like wildfire,” with hundreds of posts in a matter of days across a variety of social media platforms.¹⁸

Selfies and Rhinoplasty

Cosmetic rhinoplasty can achieve many different goals, including changes in nose size, improvements in nasal defects, improvements in facial balance and aesthetics, tip refinement, and reduction of nasal humps. Although these improvements are often significant, patients must be aware of the limitations of rhinoplasty and must always be reasonable in terms of their expectations. Rhinoplasty does not cure low self-esteem and cannot produce a “perfect” nose. However, patients with reasonable expectations, engaging skilled surgeons, are generally very happy with the results.¹

Selfies, or self-portraits, have risen in popularity as smartphone use has increased, and as social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Instagram (used, principally, by young adults) became popular. Today, everyone from Hollywood stars to prime ministers takes selfies.¹⁹

In the age of the selfie, everyone wants to look better. Self-consciousness is high and grooming and appearance at work and social events are critical.²⁰ The idea that social media can change how people think and act is a powerful one. Facebook and Twitter have created a revolution, affecting how people, particularly teens, feel about themselves, for good or ill.²¹

Rhinoplasty (a “nose job”) has long been popular, despite being one of the more difficult plastic surgeries. Today, given improvements in customization and the number of techniques available, the procedure remains complex but is now very flexible. Rhinoplasty has long been used to correct functionally flawed noses and aesthetic issues and defects, and has recently grown in popularity. Many surgeons feel that the advent of the selfie and social media has enhanced such growth, or (at least) explains why more people seek nasal surgery. As selfies are taken at close range, the nose can seem larger than it really is, which disturbs some. As more life occurs online, it is not surprising that social media affect the demand for plastic surgery.¹

A good self-image starts within, but changing undesirable features can sometimes be life-enhancing.³ Instagram hosts a growing population of young women who not only publicly admit to having had nose jobs but also describe every step of the process to their followers. The nose job-centric accounts are termed “rhinoplasty diaries,” and commence with photographs of the nose before the procedure, continuing until the swelling has subsided and the new face is revealed.²²

People seek a rhinoplasty to “resolve many unwanted nasal features.” It can change the size and shape of the nose to

improve form without impeding function. Typical concerns of patients include “a nose that is too large or too small, too flat or too pointy, crooked, or with nostrils that are too narrow or too wide.”³

In the authors’ practice, they asked questions related to “rhinoplasty and selfie” to the patients:

- How often do you take selfies?
- Are you happy with your appearance on pictures?
- Did self-portrait cause more awareness of the appearance of your nose?
- Why do you want to undergo rhinoplasty surgery, the visual appearance in the mirror, or your selfie photographs?
- Don't you like your nose appearance in your selfie photos, or does your friends' commenting on this topic affect your idea?

The reason for the aforementioned questions is that rhinoplasty candidates want to have better appearance in the life and in the social media photographs. Selfies take place in the views at social media. The authors recommend surgeons to learn patients’ ideas and expectations from the rhinoplasty operations and their ideas for the place of social media and selfie photos in their decisions to accept surgery. Related to importance of this topic, the authors planned to perform scientific research on this interesting topic.

Good rhinoplasty candidates are in “good physical health and have realistic expectations about the potential results.” A rhinoplasty can improve inherited characteristics (bumps or humps on the bridge of the nose), nasal deformities, and old injuries from nasal fractures. Other patients hope that a rhinoplasty will improve facial asymmetry (“crookedness”), refine or narrow the nasal tip, adjust tip projection, reduce the width of the nasal passages, increase or decrease the overall size of the nose, or reduce nostril size.³

One in three surveyed surgeons has experienced increases in surgical requests because their patients are dissatisfied with their images on social media. American surgeons experienced a “10% increase in rhinoplasties from 2012 to 2013, a 7% rise in hair transplants, and a 6% increase in eyelid surgery.”² Plastic surgeons in the United States have experienced a surge in demand for procedures ranging from eyelid lifts to rhinoplasty from patients “seeking to improve their image on selfies and social media.”¹⁹

A poll conducted by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS) of 2,700 of its members showed that one in three had experienced increases in procedural requests from patients sensitive to their image on social media. Requests for a rhinoplasty rose 10% from 2012 to 2013; requests for hair transplants and eyelid surgery rose 7% and 6%, respectively, over the same period.¹⁹

How to Correct Selfie-Detected Imperfections?

The increased use of video clips (instead of still images) on social media encourages those concerned about aging to seek treatments such as injection of neurotoxins including “Botox, Dysport, or Xeomin, to treat wrinkles that appear while smiling, talking, or laughing.” Major cosmetic surgery orga-

nizations report that “these treatments are becoming more popular every year”¹⁸ because many photographs are taken while subjects are still, half-smiling, and fully smiling.

The procedures to correct perceived selfie imperfections vary. Apart from the ever-popular nose job, chin implants, facelifts, and eyelid lifts are popular; in addition, nonsurgical fillers can be injected to soften deep folds such as wrinkles and laugh lines. With some types of injection, the procedure must be repeated every 6 months or 1 year. However, the short recovery times, low prices, and the lack of any need for general anesthesia have helped the business grow to 9.5 million procedures in 2015.⁴

A selfie is used to investigate one’s own face and to identify problems. The perceived need for cosmetic surgery has been greatly increased by the selfie fad.

Conclusion

Self-consciousness is increasing, as are concerns over grooming and appearance at work and social events. These issues have become more important in recent years with the increase in selfie-taking; people are now more aware of how their nose appears to others. Rhinoplasty candidates want to have better appearance in the life and in the social media photographs. Selfies take place in the views at social media.

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