

# Quality & INNOVATION

## THE FACE OF PLASTIC SURGERY



A LOOK AT MINIMALLY INVASIVE, MORE AFFORDABLE PROCEDURES

BY LESLY BAILEY  
Times Correspondent

**W**ith more Americans exposed to plastic surgery, the industry trend of minimally invasive and more affordable procedures continues to take shape. "Overall, cosmetic procedures are gaining acceptance," said Dr.

James Platis, whose father was a plastic surgeon before retiring. He took over his dad's office in Merrillville and launched CosMedic Skin and Body Clinic in Chicago in 2001.

"The biggest change I have seen in the last 20 years or so is the expansion of less invasive and office-based procedures such as Botox and dermal fillers,"

Platis said. "While there is still a bit of steady growth in surgical procedures such as face-lifts, tummy tucks and breast augmentations, there has been rapid growth in the less invasive."

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, there were 13.1 million cosmetic procedures performed in 2010 with 1.6 million being surgical and 11.6 million being minimally invasive.

The ASPS cites the top five surgical procedures as breast augmentation, nose reshaping, eyelid surgery, liposuction and tummy tuck. For minimally invasive procedures, the ASPS says the top procedure is Botox Cosmetic, with soft tissue fillers (to smooth facial wrinkles and folds), chemical peels, laser hair removal and microdermabrasion.

"Botox Cosmetic didn't exist 10 years ago," said Dr. Sreek Cherukuri, who specializes in facial plastic surgery at his Carepointe Ear, Nose and Throat and Facial Plastic Surgery offices in Munster, St. John and Merrillville. "It was approved by the FDA in 2002. Restylane was approved in 2003 as the first (hyaluronic acid) filler in the U.S. and then it just kind of exploded from there."

Platis said, "The products have changed. The materials that are available now last longer, are safe and effective and FDA-approved. The fact that they are more available and cost less has lowered the threshold to have plastic surgery procedures."

Cherukuri said, "With competition, the price comes down. A new Botox competitor (Xeomin) was recently approved. I am hoping with more and more (products) coming out, the pricing



COURTESY OF DR. SREEK CHERUKURI

**BEFORE:** Dr. Sreek Cherukuri, who specializes in facial plastic surgery at Carepointe Ear, Nose and Throat and Facial Plastic Surgery, offers patients the "weekend lift," which is a face-lift that focuses on the neck, jowls and nose and mouth lines. **AFTER:** The procedure uses local anesthetic and gets its name from its short recovery time.

will be more and more affordable."

Cherukuri believes TV shows such as "The Swan" and "Extreme Makeover" in the early 2000s helped pave the way for plastic surgery acceptance.

"At the turn of the decade, TV and society were really publicizing and making more acceptable plastic surgery," Cherukuri said. "Everyday people could see plastic surgery and visualize it and get a feel for it."

"Following that lead, more people, men and women, wanted to look and feel better and look as young as they felt. Plus, with the evolution of aging — people in their 60s and 70s are active and living longer than their parents — that set up the stage for more accessible, more affordable minimally invasive procedures where you can get back to your routine more quickly."

Cherukuri has built on his ear, nose and throat training by focusing on facial plastic surgery and offering patients the "weekend lift," which is a face-lift that focuses on the neck, jowls and nose and

mouth lines. The procedure uses local anesthetic and gets its name from its short recovery time.

"The same scientific principles from traditional face-lifts are applied. With shorter incisions and smaller areas, the downtime is less and healing is quicker," Cherukuri said. "This is my specialty. We tell everyone: Here's what it can do and here's what it can't. Not everyone qualifies. For that reason, we don't charge for a consultation. We may say we can't help you and you need something else done."

Platis has shifted his approach to face-lift surgeries at his practice, where he offers procedures such as breast enhancement, rhinoplasty "skin care to makeovers and everything in between."

"With facial-lift surgeries, we're emphasizing not just lifting tissues, but restoring volume, too," he said. "That's a component to facial rejuvenation that was underappreciated in years past. The techniques to add fat to the face where it's lost are much more predictable and much more successful."

With plastic surgery procedures more common, Platis said potential patients should consider a physician's training and whether they have facial anatomy expertise or surgery skills. He said with dwindling reimbursements from Medicare and for insurance-related surgeries, some physicians are looking to plastic surgery procedures as another form of revenue.

"Someone trained for specific purposes has done a full residency program. That is a lot different than those who go to a weekend seminar," said Platis, who is board-certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. "If physicians are not trained in surgery and doing injectables, they can't offer surgery as an option. This is a disservice to patients who could be treated with the wrong procedure."

Cherukuri agreed that people should "know the doctor's credentials."

"You have to use your gut instinct," he said. "If it sounds too good to be true, it often is."