

# Women Defying Age: The rising trend of cosmetic procedures in Millennials across the globe

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From diseased skin to desired skin, the field of Dermatology has seen a remarkable paradigm shift over the last few decades.<sup>1</sup> Cosmetic Dermatology, which was only a foreign concept a few years ago, has rapidly evolved, spreading from the Western nations to the developing countries as well, and is beginning to be recognized as a sub-specialty of Dermatology. Post graduate residents all over the world are learning these techniques as a part of their training and it will soon become a natural part of their skillset. What was once alien and strange, is now ‘the new normal’.

If there is anything that sparks a shared interest in young women around the world, it’s a heightened sensitivity to the continuously evolving standards of beauty and the desire to look like the perfect YouTube starlet. Millennials, defined as the generation born between 1981 and 1996, fall in the age range of 26-41 years in 2022, and they form one of the leading patient demographics looking for cosmetic interventions. The most popular minimally invasive procedures in this group remain botulinum toxin, dermal fillers and microdermabrasion.<sup>2</sup> Other procedures inviting growing interest are vascular lasers, non-ablative

resurfacing, and tattoo removal.<sup>3</sup> HIFU (High-Intensity Focused Ultrasound) is an emerging technique for aesthetic body contouring, and the use of threads for facial soft-tissue repositioning is increasingly in demand too. In short, from ‘vampire facials’ to stem cell rejuvenation therapy, and eyebrow-lifts to fat-freezing treatments, you can expect the modern patient in a dermatologist’s clinic to be up for anything, for the perfect look!

Among the latest cosmetic trends in Millennials is a concept known as ‘Prejuvenation’,<sup>2,3</sup> a term that combines Prevention and Rejuvenation. The idea here is to have early and minimal interventions, preventing the signs of aging but also maintaining a rather natural-looking appearance, rather than going for more drastic procedures down the line or a frozen or sculpted to the face. There is little evidence to support Prejuvenation as a means to slow down skin aging and yet, preventing wrinkles, having glass skin, a chiseled jaw line, or other such ideals of personal appearance seem to be driving a market trend that dermatologists need to understand and respond to. As such, it is important to understand the motivations and perspectives of these young people into the field of Aesthetic Dermatology.

It is no secret as to what drives their quest into beauty and wellness. It is the age of social media and the average millennial spends several hours every day on social media. On forums such as Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and others, they are

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exposed not only to heavily edited photos of other women creating a false impression of perfection, but also to sources such as social media influencers, doctors, pharmaceutical companies and even patients sharing their experiences of getting aesthetic procedures and benefitting from them.<sup>4</sup> This unhindered access to information leads to comparison, and increasingly, to an obsession with youth and beauty. Their choices are thus influenced by fads and trends. As an example, there was a sudden increase in global online interest in lip fillers when the US celebrity Kylie Jenner announced that she had taken lip filler injections.<sup>5</sup>

During the pandemic, this went one step further as people spent more time than ever before on videoconferencing platforms and discovered dissatisfaction with their appearances, sparking more interest in beauty treatments and aesthetic procedures.<sup>6</sup> It is easy to see how all this could cause anxiety and body dysmorphia in a generation full of vulnerable individuals. In one study, young women were asked to take a selfie and edit it within 10 minutes before uploading it to the internet. The results showed that the more time these women spent editing the picture, the more dissatisfied they were with their facial appearance.<sup>7</sup> This takes us to the ethical choice that a dermatologist must make, not to feed upon a customer market made of frustrated people with insecurities, and instead adhere to the code of medical ethics and tread cautiously in the domain of social media marketing.<sup>8</sup>

It is also our professional and moral responsibility as Dermatologists to educate our patients on the dangers of medical spas, quacks, non-physician operators and counterfeit products

that are common in commercial practice nowadays and cashing out on a newly emerging market.<sup>9</sup> There is a need to come up with strategies that can mitigate the risk of adverse patient outcomes with such practices, and protect not only our specialty, but also our patients who deserve high quality care from their physicians.

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