Ethics of the commercialization of plastic surgery considered
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Noting that plastic surgery has recently been treated as a commercial product and marketed directly to the public, Eric Swanson, M.D., from private practice in Leawood, Kan., discusses the ethical challenges relating to this business practice and its implication on patients and plastic surgeons.

Swanson notes that the corporate model uses a procedure-driven marketing approach, where patients are recommended for surgery before meeting a physician. Plastic surgeons promote products which do not necessarily offer any clinical benefit for the patient but hold a marketing advantage. The use of corporate marketing often understates surgical complication rates, and corporate models may pose safety issues. Patients' safety and education should take precedence over business concerns. Plastic surgeons have a responsibility to provide the truth and professionalism; ideals should not be set aside for the financial security offered by commercial entities. Given the uniqueness of patients, and of surgeons' capabilities, techniques must be individualized.

"Our surgical training is a privilege to be honored by refusing to settle for something less than our ideals," Swanson writes. "Trademarked labels and gadgets will come and go; only a few will prove to be genuine advancements, and seldom more important than the surgeon's expertise."

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