



## Research Update

# Increased interest in cosmetic procedures linked to Zoom Dysmorphia



*Peter C. Revenaugh, MD, and Ryan M. Smith, MD, published a study detailing a noticeable, increased interest in cosmetic procedures during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed a relationship to the recently coined phenomenon, Zoom dysmorphia.*

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This past February, Rush University Medical Center's Peter C. Revenaugh, MD, and Ryan M. Smith, MD, published a study detailing a noticeable, increased interest in cosmetic procedures during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed a relationship to the recently coined phenomenon, Zoom dysmorphia.

After an initial decrease in appointments during the earliest months of quarantine, they noticed an uptick in the number of scheduled patients. Seeking to measure and compare this trend with a wider set of data, their team, led by chief resident Michael Eggerstedt, MD, applied a search engine tool to determine the volume of certain terms related to cosmetic procedures during specific periods of time during the pandemic. They defined the search using facial plastic procedures terms including blepharoplasty, rhinoplasty, face lifts,

neck lifts, and eyelid lifts. Month over month in 2020, the searches increased more than Revenaugh and Smith would have normally predicted.

“During the summer, there was an expected increase in rhinoplasty interest, but it was higher than normal,” Revenaugh said. “Patient procedures like neck and face lifts increased by 600% compared to the previous years. In general, searches for cosmetic procedures showed a real-world increase by percentages in the hundreds.”

Their study showed a negative deflection of consumer interest in facial plastic procedures during the early months of the pandemic with no statistically significant difference between procedures that involved the upper or lower face when the consumer interest began to precipitously increase. Overall, the study demonstrated a significantly larger positive deflection from June 2020 to October 2020 compared to brow lifts and facelifts, but not compared to blepharoplasty.<sup>1</sup>

Based on the conditions during the pandemic, considered factors relating to this increase include patients having more time to recover from procedures while working remotely, increased disposable income, and the increased use of online platforms like Zoom. While using the latter, patients view sustained images of their own face — often presented simultaneously with faces of others — and it is more common for people to notice and compare what they perceive as imperfections of their neck and face.<sup>2</sup> Revenaugh described his unique perspective on the phenomenon, “Zoom Dysmorphia is supposed to describe when people have an unhealthy focus on their face, but I think we’re seeing an increased awareness in our patients.”

“People are highly sensitive to their facial appearance and this is a reflection of patients taking the opportunity to work on their face,” Smith said.

“Our past research has looked at how technology can distort the perception of your true facial features and I think it’s true of Zoom that you’re not always seeing your true appearance. However, in my experience during the pandemic I haven’t had a lot of patients come in to ask for unnecessary surgery despite the limitations of this technology.”

Both Revenaugh and Smith expressed an interest in continuing research in comparing their patients’ needs for cosmetic procedures versus their self-perceptions through online platforms during and after the pandemic. “We’re both very interested in a patient’s perception of their face. We find it fascinating to see this play out in real time and to see things change so rapidly; it’s a strange time to live, but we feel privileged to contribute to the overall body of literature on how we perceive ourselves.”

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## Citations

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