PLASTIC SURGERY

Plastic surgery deals with the repair, reconstruction, or replacement of physical defects of form or function involving the skin, musculoskeletal system, head and facial structures, hand, extremities, breasts and trunk. The specialty encompasses both cosmetic and reconstructive surgery. Cosmetic surgery is performed to reshape normal structures of the body in order to improve the patient's appearance and self-esteem. Reconstructive surgery is performed on abnormal structures of the body, caused by congenital defects, developmental abnormalities, trauma, infection, tumors or disease. It is generally performed to improve function, but may also be done to approximate a normal appearance.

A foundation in surgical anatomy, physiology and pathology is fundamental to this specialty. Plastic surgeons need to have surgical knowledge, surgical judgment, technical expertise, ethics, the ability to think in three dimensions, good aesthetic sense, creativity, and appreciation for detail. Subspecialty certifications include craniofacial surgery and surgery of the hand.
Profile
The following information reflects responses from 44 plastic surgeons who completed the 2003 Pathway Physician's Survey.

A. Respondents by types of areas
- Rural: 2.33%
- Small City: 34.88%
- Metropolitan City: 44.19%
- Large City: 18.60%

B. Respondents by gender
- Female: 18.18%
- Male: 81.82%

C. Respondents by years in practice

Perspectives

A. Respondents’ satisfaction with current specialty/area of work
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

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Perspectives

A. Respondents’ satisfaction with current specialty/area of work
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
B. Would you choose this specialty again?

- **Yes**: 90.91%
- **No**: 4.55%
- **Not Sure**: 4.55%

C. Respondents by practice environment

D. Respondents' satisfaction with practice environment
Rating and Weighting of Critical Factors

Critical Factors represent significant aspects of physicians’ experiences in their practices. The rating represents their assessment of their current practice characteristics, while the weighting represents the importance of each factor to physicians.

A. Caring for patients: How much time do you spend directly seeing and caring for patients?

Rating

Weighting

B. Continuity of care: How much continuity of care do you have with patients, (i.e., the length of patient relationships)?

Rating

Weighting

C. Autonomy: To what extent do you have the final word on the treatment of your patients?
D. Diversity: How much routine (similar work) or diversity (different tasks/activities) is involved in your work?

E. Personal time: Does your work allow you to control the scheduling and amount of time you spend on personal activities, (i.e., family, leisure)?

F. Expertise: How broad is the scope of your work?
G. Income satisfaction: Compared to all physicians, do you feel you are fairly compensated for the amount of time and effort you spend?

- Rating
  - Very dissatisfied: 0
  - Highly satisfied: 10
  - Score: 5.9
  - Standard Deviation: 2.75

- Weighting
  - Not at all important: 0
  - Very important: 5
  - Score: 4.1
  - Standard Deviation: 0.87

H. Creativity: To what extent does your work provide opportunity for creativity?

- Rating
  - Little opportunity: 0
  - Great deal of opportunity: 10
  - Score: 8.5
  - Standard Deviation: 2.03

- Weighting
  - Not at all important: 0
  - Very important: 5
  - Score: 4.6
  - Standard Deviation: 0.58

I. Certainty of outcomes: How much certainty of clinical outcomes does your work provide?

- Rating
  - Very little, often "wait and see": 0
  - A great deal, outcomes usually clear: 10
  - Score: 7.8
  - Standard Deviation: 1.67

- Weighting
  - Not at all important: 0
  - Very important: 5
  - Score: 4.2
  - Standard Deviation: 0.63
**J. Clinical decision-making**: On what basis are your clinical decisions made?

- **Rating**: Application of theory to a situation. Based on prior evidence of clinical outcomes. Rating: 7.5, $\sigma = 1.68$.

- **Weighting**: Not at all important to Very important. Weighting: 4.0, $\sigma = 0.88$.

**K. Patient decision-making**: To what extent do your patients have input into decisions about their health care?

- **Rating**: Little opportunity to Great deal of opportunity. Rating: 8, $\sigma = 1.94$.

- **Weighting**: Not at all important to Very important. Weighting: 3.8, $\sigma = 1.08$.

**L. Interacting with other physicians/members of health-care team**: To what extent does your work provide opportunities for you to interact with other physicians/members of a health-care team?

- **Rating**: Very little to A great deal. Rating: 5.9, $\sigma = 2.66$.

- **Weighting**: Not at all important to Very important. Weighting: 3.3, $\sigma = 1.14$.
M. Manual/mechanical activities: How often do you use manual/mechanical activities for highly skilled tasks (i.e., following procedures, performing operations)?

Rating

\[ \sigma = 0.95 \]

Weighting

\[ \sigma = 0.79 \]

N. Pressure: How much pressure do you have in your work (i.e., dealing with clinical crises, need for immediate decisions about patients, dealing with multiple patients simultaneously).

Rating

\[ \sigma = 2.20 \]

Weighting

\[ \sigma = 1.07 \]

O. Responsibility: How much responsibility do you assume for patient outcomes in your work?

Rating

\[ \sigma = 0.79 \]

Weighting

\[ \sigma = 0.88 \]
P. Schedule: What type of schedule do you have in your work?

- **Rating:** 5.2
- **Weighting:** 4.5

Q. Security: How much professional security do you have in your position, (i.e., know where you stand and are certain of your future professionally, will there be a need for your services in the future)?

- **Rating:** 7.4
- **Weighting:** 4.0

R. Sense of accomplishment: To what extent does your work provide the opportunity to see end results?

- **Rating:** 9.2
- **Weighting:** 4.7
Weekly distribution of time

According to the survey, plastic surgeons spend their week as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Average Hours per week (may overlap)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patient care activities</td>
<td>48.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-call (in contact)</td>
<td>14.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-call (available)</td>
<td>80.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>9.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional travel</td>
<td>5.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patient profile

A. Patient encounters per week

B. Patient characteristics

By age

- Infants (0-2 yrs): 4.31%
- Children (3-18 yrs): 8.20%
- Adults (19-64 yrs): 73.27%
- Older adults (65+ yrs): 16.85%

By race

- Underrepresented minority (URM): 14.23%
- Non-URM: 85.77%

Percentage of patient encounters that deal with:

- Routine check-ups: 21.83%
- Acute illness: 32.38%
- Chronic illness: 21.97%
- Terminal illness: 4.77%

Percentage of time per patient encounter devoted to:

- Acute conditions: 53.63%
- Chronic conditions: 24.56%
- Preventive health: 16.68%

By type of insurance

- Medicaid/Medicare: 18.00%
- Uninsured: 9.50%
- Other: 72.50%

C. Five types of illnesses/conditions most frequently encountered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illness/Condition</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetic (all types)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin cancer</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast reconstruction</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast reduction surgery</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand surgery</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Specialty: Plastic Surgery**

**Total survey responses:** 44

**Summary of comments for question:** *List up to three other factors, if any, you would advise students to consider carefully before selecting your specialty?*

Physicians who completed the Pathway Physician’s Survey, 2003, submitted the following comments. The majority of comments are categorized by the Critical Factors that are rated and weighted in another section. Numbers in parentheses indicate the total number of responses for a particular comment.

1. **Caring for Patients**
   - Willingness to enjoy patient interaction

2. **Continuity of Care**

3. **Autonomy**

4. **Diversity**
   - Diversity of scope of practice that is the sine qua non of plastic surgery

5. **Personal Time**
   - Family plans/time for family (2)
   - Free time
   - Personal lifestyle/goals that they prefer (3)
   - Importance of family (esp. if female)

6. **Expertise**
   - Surgical artistry
   - Mental and physical work

7. **Income Satisfaction**
   - Negative reimbursement trend in reconstructive surgery

8. **Creativity**
   - Think out of box
   - Ability to think broadly and creatively with sound clinical thinking and apply medical and surgical methods of treatment for a variety of clinical and anatomical problems
   - Freedom of thought
   - Artistic aptitude/creativity/ability (5)
   - Be innovative

9. **Clinical Decision Making**
   - Independence of decision-making
11. Patient Decision Making

12. Interacting with Other Physicians/Members of Health-care Team

13. Manual /Mechanical Activities
   • Manual ability

14. Pressure

15. Responsibility
   • Taking personal responsibility (2)

16. Schedule
   • Time commitment (3)

17. Security
   • Numbers of physicians providing this specialty, is it oversupplied?
   • Future practice restriction
   • Opportunities in specific location (concentration of plastic surgeons)
   • What does the future hold in its need for physicians eg. aging population with increased longevity, less invasive surgery, etc. What type of practice will be needed in the near and distant future?
   • Competition from other specialties (3)

18. Sense of Accomplishment

19. Patient Characteristics
   • Patient personality issues
   • I love having appreciative patients
   • High patient expectations
   • 90% of my patients are white women

20. Types of Illnesses

21. Practice Environment
   • Malpractice issues
   • Availability of outpatient surgery centers

22. Health Care Environment
   • Changing technology especially genetics will see the demise of plastic surgery as a separate specialty
   • Medical-legal environment
   • Litigious society
   • Interference by insurance companies, HMO's etc.
23. Personality/Temperament
- Communication/interpersonal skills (2)
- Ability to teach
- Physical stamina needed (2)
- Don't be a people-pleaser personality
- Integrity
- Strong business sense
- Have thick skin

24. Miscellaneous Comments
- Alter career over time
- Cross-over with other specialties
- Entrepreneurship
- Plastic surgery is a commitment
- Volunteer work
- Family/ significant other who understands and supports above
- Collaboration
- Ethics
- Technical skill (2)
- Advanced training
- Quality of same-specialty colleagues
- Need to keep up with advances
- Length of training (7)
- Debt load
- Enjoy the work you do/satisfaction (3)
- Location (2)