Letter to the Editor

Hidden Dangers of Plastic Surgery on the Television

In recent years, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of plastic surgery television programs being broadcast worldwide. Like others in our field, we feel strongly that this newfound fascination with our work should be received with caution. "Show biz" plastic surgery has many worrying consequences, not least for surgeons, patients, and others drawn to such programming. We report an unusual plastic surgery complication related to such viewing.

While watching an aesthetic plastic surgery program on television, a gentleman recently sustained injuries requiring him to undergo plastic surgery himself! This 50-year-old male truck driver had stopped for the night and was preparing some soup in the cab of his truck using a portable gas stove. During his food preparation, he was watching a television program highlighting the techniques (and benefits) of brow-lifting. His fascination with the procedure quickly turned to horror as intraoperative images were broadcast, causing him to faint and collapse onto the gas stove, spilling the hot soup in the process. He sustained contact burns from the stove and scald injuries from the soup totaling 5% of his body surface area. His injuries involved his face, upper chest, and both hands, with burns over approximately 3% of his body surface area, requiring tangential excision and skin grafting. He remained unable to work because of his injuries for several months, and at this writing, continues to be reviewed as an outpatient for burn scar management.

This case highlights, albeit quite extremely, the impact that plastic surgery television programs can have on the viewing public. Whereas people are fascinated with the "amazing results" of what plastic/aesthetic surgery can produce, some individuals may not be prepared for what the actual surgery may entail. This is the case not only for potential plastic/aesthetic surgery patients, but indeed for the viewers of "show biz" plastic surgery programs as well. We urge television production companies and others involved with the making of plastic surgery programs to provide appropriate warnings to viewers that graphic images may provoke strong emotions and other physiologic effects! We should be cautious of plastic surgery overexposure on the television, not only for the well-being of the profession, but also for the health of the public!

J. Rawlins, M.Phil., MRCS

A. Williams, MRCS

M. Riaz, FRCS (Plast)

Plastic Surgery Department
Castle Hill Hospital
Cottingham Hull, East Yorkshire
HU16 5JQ, UK