



# OFFICE OF THE SURFACE

## Vol. 12 – Hand Soap Texts + A Post-Melanoma Surgical Question

Giving the people what they want -- including the dupes.

Jamie Rosen | February 28, 2025

### OUR FIRST READER QUESTION:

*Hi Jamie - I'm excited to be a new subscriber! I was wondering if you might be willing to share any recommendations for a facelift surgeon who does very subtle work? I'm based in Boston but happy to travel. I'm 41 so on the younger side, but am looking for a surgeon to help correct contour irregularities due to my melanoma surgeries. I don't know anyone who has had plastic surgery, so I'm a bit lost in the hunt - thank you so much for any leads you might be able to offer! - A*

Hi A! I'm so glad you're here. Most importantly, hope you are well. Let's break this down. I consulted with Dr. Steven Williams, a board-certified plastic & reconstructive surgeon and recent president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) to get his extremely valuable input as well.

1. When it comes to finding a physician, **you want someone who is board certified, full stop.** For plastic surgeons, there are several boards and societies you can check, including the American Board of Plastic Surgery, the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, American Board of Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, the Oculofacial Society, and the American Board of Otolaryngology. Dr. Williams points out that not all cosmetic surgeons are plastic surgeons, so membership in the first two boards mentioned is "another good sign you're dealing with a surgeon who's actually trained in aesthetics."

Here's his take: "First off, congratulations on beating melanoma. That's the huge win. Let's clear up a common misconception: you absolutely know people who've had plastic surgery—you just don't realize it." Good point, Dr. Williams!

I'm not a doctor, and I don't know you personally, so I am hesitant to recommend specific physicians. However, it may also be worth meeting with a board-certified dermatologist (check the American Board of Dermatology) in your area to see what can be done non-surgically before exploring surgery. It's possible that there are lasers, fillers or alternate treatments that might be suitable for contour irregularities that do not require surgery. Whether you meet with a dermatologist or plastic surgeon, do not be afraid to ask questions, request before-and-afters that would be similar to their recommendations, and this may seem obvious, but always get a second opinion.

**2. What does subtle mean to you?** Subtle is a relative term, so it's helpful to define what that looks like for you. Is it restoring your appearance to what it looked like pre-treatment? Is it addressing contour irregularities as well as some signs of aging? Some doctors will ask to see photos of you from 10, 15, or 20 years ago to get a sense of how you looked then and how you are aging to help them determine the best path forward. It's also helpful to set expectations for what you're really hoping to get out of a procedure and articulate them. A good doctor will be honest with you about the outcomes, the risks, and what you can truly expect what all is said and done. As Dr. Williams puts it: "The best work is subtle and it is really the focus of current techniques. The difference between 'refreshed' and 'worked on' comes down to technique, experience, and who's holding the scalpel."

**3. Finding a reconstructive specialist:** In addition to board certification, it's important that any physician you work with have lots of experience or ideally specialize in reconstruction. Many cosmetic doctors are very passionate about this work. "Your past melanoma surgeries are a big factor in planning your facelift. Scar tissue, blood supply, and previous incisions can change the game. Bringing your old operative notes to your consultation can help your surgeon map out a plan that's both safe and effective," says Dr. Williams. "If any new suspicious lesions are part of the facelift surgical plan, make sure they're sent for pathology."

4. **Consider location and recovery.** Keep in mind that if you don't choose to work with someone in the Boston area, you'll have to consider travel and follow-up care. "A cross-country facelift might sound glamorous, but post-op complications can turn a dream trip into a logistical nightmare," says Dr. Williams. "You've already beaten melanoma. Now, take your time, do your homework, and find the right expert to help you move forward—on your terms. Good luck!"

I hope this is helpful, and I think the biggest thing is to start the conversation and fully understand your options before you commit to anything.

X

Jamie

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