

Does YOUR Doctor Have The Qualifications To Do What You're Looking For?

As a new advertiser in this publication, allow me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Derek Lou, a board certified plastic surgeon practicing in Houston. My goal here is to provide you with a closer look at an industry that is very relevant to yours: aesthetic surgery.

For this first installment I'd like to bring to your attention the first thing you should know before even stepping into a doctor's office. **Does this doctor even have the qualifications to do what you're looking for?**

You may have found them online, heard of them through a friend who saw him/her, or you may have seen a billboard or advertisement and decided to set up an appointment. Setting up the appointment was easy, the person on the phone was really nice, the office may be in a swanky part of town, and the doctor may have a great reputation. But none of that tells you really anything important about the doctor, does it?

As a plastic surgeon, I get frustrated hearing about non-surgeons performing surgeries like breast augmentation, tummy tucks, and facelifts. There are talented non-surgeons out there who can perform a procedure; but the real question you should ask is not what they can do, but what if something goes wrong? I've taken care of way too many patients who traveled across the border or went to a motel room (yes, that does happen) and saved themselves money...but when they are botched it is a disaster and the costs skyrocket. Simply seeing a qualified surgeon could have made all the difference.

And that's really the key here isn't it... qualified. What does that mean?

First of all, let's start with what sounds like the obvious. Is your doctor actually in the field that you are looking for? Like I mentioned above, I see this more in the cosmetic field, but all it takes is a simple question. If there's any uncertainty, ask the office or visit the doctor's website to see what kind of doctor the doctor is. Are they a plastic surgeon? You may get the ambiguous "cosmetic surgeon" answer, which is like asking someone if they play in the NBA and they tell you that they "play basketball".

Plastic surgeons call themselves plastic surgeons; others can't make that claim. You'd be surprised how many flashy websites I've seen where, when you really look, they never mention what kind of doctor the doctor really is. Or they use the ever misleading term "cosmetic surgeon". I can call myself a "minister" because I got an online certificate for free from a ministry I found on the internet, but it doesn't mean I'm ready to officiate a wedding.

So who is qualified?

Well, there are national governing bodies (called Medical Boards) within each medical specialty that oversee and monitor their doctor-members. Membership requires a confirmation of the location and type of medical education that doctors have received and requires them to pass a specified series of written and oral examinations to prove that they are proficient in their field of specialty. In other words, only the qualified doctors can become board certified, and the board monitors their activity to ensure a high level of proficiency and ethical behavior.

So is your doctor board certified? It's easy to find the answer. You can start with finding their medical board at the American Board

of Medical Specialties website at www.abms.org. Look your surgeon up under the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

(Fun facts: the "American Board of Cosmetic Surgery" is not a real board even though it sounds convincing, and Dr. 90210 tried to pass the plastic surgery boards 3 times and failed and is not board certified.)

Next thing you should look up is the status of your doctor's medical license. Physicians are required to have a medical license in order to practice medicine. Licensure is governed at the state level much akin to lawyers, with some states requiring some form of written examination. All require background checks of applicants and review of their qualifications. Overall, the medical licensure process doesn't necessarily gauge a doctor's abilities, but really substantiates that they are actually a doctor (and not just one that stayed at a Holiday Inn Express last night).

So is your doctor in good standing with the state medical board? All it takes to find that out is a few minutes on the internet to find your state medical board website and look up your doctor. You should be able to find any documented history of discipline by the board against your doctor if it exists.

So before you get too excited looking for implants or Botox, just spend a few minutes researching who you plan on seeing. It could make all the difference.



Dr. Derek C. Lou
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