

# Moultrie News

Section B



**Smile of the Week**  
 "I'm smiling because Jesus is the reason for the season."  
 -Wayne Cassaday

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## Plastic surgery for the body

### An interview with East Cooper surgeon Richard Kline

*(Editor's Note: This is the third of a four-part series on plastic surgery east of the Cooper.)*

BY BRIGITTE SURETTE  
 SPECIAL TO THE MOULTRIE NEWS

Lipo, tummy tuck, boob job . . . terms well known in our culture today and tossed around easily in conversations. Most of us know someone who has had some kind of cosmetic procedure, some of us have had procedures ourselves and still many of us are seriously considering it. Every week, programs such as Extreme Makeover show us how getting rid of physical flaws transforms lives. Are we being lulled into thinking that a lift here, a tuck there is as easy as getting a new hairdo or losing 10 pounds?

Americans spent \$6.5 billion on cosmetic surgical procedures last year. Liposuction was the number one surgical procedure, with breast augmentation a close second. Women account for the overwhelming majority of body-contouring procedures. With lipo and tummy tucks giving moms their pre-baby bodies

back, 35-50 year women no longer have to settle for bodies like their mother had after children. They want to look better longer.

Seeking the ideal form is nothing new, especially for women. Until the 20th century, women endured corsets that constricted their breathing and actually squeezed their internal organs - all for sake of an hourglass figure.

In truth, body contouring is nothing new; only the ways in which we're achieving it are. Has modern medicine offered us better ways in which to attain the perfect body? What are the most popular body contouring procedures? What about the risks and complications? I interviewed Dr. Richard Kline of East Cooper Plastic Surgery to find out.

#### The Surgeon

Dr. Richard Kline, a Charleston native, attended MUSC to obtain his medical degree, completing his general surgery internship in 1985.

"Like many Charlestonians, I went off to the big city to get educated," he said with a

laugh. Kline's surgical background is indeed impressive. He was at the prestigious Cleveland Clinic in Ohio from 85-89 for his general surgery residency; he did his plastic surgery residency at Louisiana State; and he spent a year at the University of Miami for a year of craniofacial surgery.

"After being away from Charleston for 11 years, I came back in 1996 to MUSC and was the first full-time craniofacial surgeon in the area," said Kline. Kline applied his expertise to reconstructive surgery while at MUSC, then decided to open East Cooper Plastic Surgery in January of 2000.

"At East Cooper Plastic Surgery, my colleague, Dr. Craigie and I have a mission: to make our patients happy. From the moment they contact our office, we want to answer all their questions, be reassuring and positive," Kline stated.

Dr. Kline still works in the field of reconstructive surgery, but said that he finds plastic surgery challenging and gratifying.

"I found that when I rotated through plastic surgery during my residency at the Cleveland Clinic, forms and shapes (facial and body contouring procedures) were fascinating. It wasn't until January of my chief resident year of general surgery that I said I'm going to be a plastic surgeon."

East Cooper Plastic Surgery specializes in both facial and body plastic surgery and has over 13,000 before-and-after pictures of past patients that illustrate their experience and expertise.

Kline stated that in his practice, the top three procedures for plastic surgery of the body are liposuction, breast augmentation and abdominoplasty (tummy tuck). "The majority of my patients are overwhelmingly female for cosmetic surgery," Kline confirmed. The average age for plastic surgery for the body varies greatly, depending on the surgery, anywhere from early 20s to 60.

#### Liposuction

"The ideal patient for lipo is a woman who has not had children so that she doesn't have a lot of stretched, extra skin; near her ideal body weight, in good health and has some of those gender specific problems such as saddlebags or a little



The tummy tuck patient also had a little liposuction a few months after the tummy tuck. She also has an unusually good result. Most patients should not expect quite this much improvement.

bit of tummy or hips," said Kline.

Dr. Kline uses the tumescent technique for liposuction invented by two dermatologists in 1985. "A very, very dilute solution of drugs that contain an infusion of saline, adrenaline and anesthetic is injected into the area," Kline said.

The drugs act as a local anesthetic and some patients may not require general anesthesia. An incision is made and fat is sucked or suctioned using a wand like device or syringe known as a cannula. These areas are marked prior to surgery and provide a topical map for the surgeon.

"The tumescent technique brought blood loss down considerably compared to previous methods," said Kline. "It's (tumescent) made it a procedure that can be done without general anesthesia, but it's hard to predict which patients will tolerate the procedure without it. Some patients may have a more dense connective tissue in their fat and that may prevent the local anesthesia from diffusing through the tissue. We usually insist men have anesthesia because they don't tolerate pain as well as women."

Kline stated that the sensational stories we see about serious complications in liposuction are most likely high-volume lipo in which surgeons take more than 4-5 liters of aspirate (fat and fluids) and are done in an outpatient setting with no access to ambula-



tory or a hospital environment. Although higher volume lip suction can be done safely under the right circumstances Kline chooses to do lower volume. "I choose not to do high-volume lipo because it has to be done in a hospital setting or an ambulatory surgery center where the patient stays overnight. Our lipo procedures are performed here in our center and we are JCAHO certified. We have a formal agreement with the hospital to transfer a patient in case of a complication that may need that kind of environment."

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, or JCAHO, is considered the "Gold Standard" in health care and means an outpatient facility has met stringent standards evaluated by healthcare professionals.

Kline stated, "I always err on the side of taking too little as opposed to taking too much. Instead of viewing that as a problem, I just incorporate that as part of the procedure. I tell my patients that there's about a one-in-three chance

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The liposuction was of the abdomen, arms, and inner thighs. A total of 5 liters of aspirate was removed, which is the maximum that can be done as an outpatient.



**On Vacation With The Moultrie News**

The infante family took a summer vacation to the Grand Canyon. Pictured here are Andy, Dawn, Anderson, Jonathan, Allison and Chris.

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# Lipo: Patients detail plastic surgery experiences with Dr. Kline

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after they're completed healed, usually in three months, that we'll go back and do a little touch up or tweaking. We're only talking about tablespoons (of fat) and no one ever runs away from being conservative."

Liposuction permanently removes fat cells. When I asked Kline why some people have lipo and seem to gain weight back, he said, "The fat that is ideally removed from the stomach and saddlebags in women and from the stomach and flanks (back near the waist) in men is a different kind of fat. The way liposuction was conceived was not as a bodywide thing; it was conceived to take out that special fat in those areas that have far, far fewer connections through it, between the skin and underlying muscle so it's much easier to remove."

Since most of us gain weight in these areas, it's a kind of early warning signal. Our pants get a bit snug, and we can surmise we've put on a few pounds. "When you take that fat away, it doesn't mean you're more likely to get fat, but, in effect, you lose your early warning system, so when you do gain weight, it's not in those places that you once had. Instead, those pounds are distributed diffusely across your body. Since that warning system is gone, you've gained maybe 15 pounds instead of the five that used to let you know your pants are getting tighter. Those are the people that may feel lipo made me fat."

Liposuction is not a solution to weight loss, although the procedure is a very effective means of correcting genetic or gender specific problems such

as saddlebags, bulging tummies, flanks and heavy thighs that do not respond to traditional forms such as exercise and diet.

## Tucks, breast augmentation

"The majority of my patients that decide to have tummy tucks are women who have had children and want their pre-mommy bodies back, typically in their late 20's or 30's. It's also very common to do a breast augmentation or lift and tummy tuck all in one surgery. We call it the mommy special. We can take almost any woman who is within 20 percent of their ideal body weight, no matter how ravaged their body is by child-bearing and put them in a two-piece bathing suit," Kline said confidently.

\*Carrie Smith (name changed to respect privacy), a 40-year-old patient of Dr. Kline's did just that. Smith, a research accountant, has two children and was tired of trying on bathing suits and feeling self-conscious. "After children, my stomach muscles were stretched to the point that no matter how much I exercised, I couldn't get my stomach to go down, it was like this little pooch remained, no matter what. Plus I always felt that my breasts were too large and with gravity, age and after having my children, they sagged more. After talking it over with my husband, I decided to do it."

Smith had a tummy tuck, a slight breast reduction, and a breast lift. She consulted several surgeons before deciding to go with Dr. Kline. "I got a recommendation from a neurosurgeon I knew, plus Dr. Kline's background and expertise in reconstructive

and plastic surgery impressed me. My mother who is in her 60s had a tummy tuck by Dr. Kline, and she was very happy with the results."

Smith said that she did extensive research before making her decision, but that she would do it again. "It has changed my life tremendously. The recovery was actually better than I expected, but I was out of work for two and half weeks."

Smith said that the tummy tuck was the most painful procedure in terms of recovery. "Because of childbearing, my stomach muscles were stretched 5-1/2 inches apart, so the muscles had to be sutured together, and I lost a lot of skin. Trying to manipulate my body to sit up was the most difficult part, and it was about a week and a half before I could do it on my own."

Her advice to other women was to make sure you had support from family members and/or friends and to feel comfortable with your surgeon of choice. As for her overall experience she stated, "Dr. Kline and his staff were wonderful and answered all my questions. But, I did this (surgery) for me. It's not going to fix anything in life or change the way people think of you. It's the way you think about yourself that changes."

Kline prefers the high lateral tension tummy tuck invented by Ted Lockwood, a surgeon in Kansas City. "It (high-lateral) gives patients a better defined waist and pulls the waist in as opposed to the standard tummy tuck. Because of the direction of pull (up), it also pulls better tone into your thighs." The procedure has the advantage of using two zones of maximum tension, one on either side of

the abdomen which also results in much better healing.

For breast augmentation, Kline uses saline implants and stressed the importance of choosing the correct size of implant. "I look at a patient and determine what is the largest implant that I can put in that will look natural. It will fool virtually all laypeople and may not fool a surgeon, but they (surgeon) will say that's a good job. I'll give my recommendation to a patient, but if they're looking for very large implants that I don't believe are the best choice for them, I suggest that they seek another surgeon. That virtually never happens after I tell them my reasons. I've never had a patient that wasn't happy with their augmentation. I think it's a paternal instinct with me; I want my patients to look good. Most are in tears (thrilled) after surgery," Kline said.

Other women opt for a breast lift - a procedure that is more expensive and more complicated than a breast augmentation. "The only so-called problem with a breast lift is that you're not going to get the upper fullness of the breasts that you will with augmentation," Kline stated.

"Some women don't care since in a normal breast, there isn't that much upper fullness."

## Complications and risks

"The complications (for surgical body procedures) in my experience are exceedingly rare, but I advise my patients of the risks, all of them," Kline said.

Complications include contour deformity (uneven areas) in liposuction; capsular contraction (hardening of the

breasts) and blood clots that can sometimes be fatal.

"Blood clots are very rare, but I tell my patients that it can happen. We may be stricter than some facilities, and we may get a surprise reaction because we do tell them all the risks, but they don't run away. I think they appreciate our giving them the whole picture so that these complications are avoided and they appreciate that," Kline said.

Kline said that other risk factors include smoking, obesity and the use of birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy. He advises women to stop taking hormones at least a month before surgery. Use of hormones may increase the risk of blood clots.

As for smoking, Kline was adamant about the increased risks, not just for obvious health reasons, but in relation to surgical procedures as well.

"For breast augmentation patients, there is a very strong connection between smoking and capsular contraction (hardening of the breasts). I ask my patients who smoke, which do you like better, smoking or soft breasts?" Kline said.

"There are certain procedures where the risk of smoking is just too high and the chance of having wound healing problems is too big. Facelifts, breast lifts and reductions require that we stress the tissue much more (than some other procedures), and we're doing much more extensive dissection, which reduces the blood flow to the tissue. If you throw in reduced blood flow from smoking, suddenly your incidence for complications becomes almost 100 percent," Kline said.

He went on to say that for those people (smokers) and

those surgical procedures, patients are required to quit smoking prior to surgery. "We take a urine test the day of surgery and if it's positive, we would not do surgery. And do you know, not one person has tested positive?" Kline said.

He also stated that a significant number of patients who were smokers before surgery become non-smokers after surgery.

## Recommendation

"Ask yourself, who am I doing this for? If the answer is anyone other than yourself, plastic surgery is not for you. If you choose surgery as a way to change those things about yourself that you can't do through diet and exercise, do your research and make sure you genuinely like not only your surgeon, but the entire staff and atmosphere as well. You should feel very comfortable with your surgeon. Don't have surgery unless you have a good feeling about the whole experience," Kline said.

For more information about East Cooper Plastic Surgery and information mentioned in this article, call 843-849-8418 or visit online at [www.eoplasticsurgery.com](http://www.eoplasticsurgery.com).

(Editor's Note: The views expressed in this article are not necessarily the views of the Moultrie News or the author. This article is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. Anyone who is considering any type of medical procedure or surgery should consult with their surgeon of choice.)

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