

CURRENT STATUS IN LEGISLATION OF PLASTIC SURGERY PROCEDURES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, plastic surgery and cosmetology appeared to be the most prominent emerging markets in medicine in the Russian Federation. These two specialties were officially recognized as independent entities in March 2009; however, there were no institutions for the proper training of plastic surgeons in Russia. Since 1982, the license provided by local medical authorities has been given not for plastic surgery, but for “surgical cosmetology” procedures. This license is not given to individual surgeons. It is awarded to hospitals or private clinics if one of the employees has a certificate as a maxillofacial surgeon and once every five years goes through one month of postgraduate courses on so called “surgical cosmetology.” So according to the law in Russia, patients interested in breast augmentation or abdominoplasty with hernia repair must find a stomatologist or maxillofacial surgeon who has spent 144 hours in lectures on aesthetic surgery. There is still no residency training in plastic surgery in Russia. At the same time, international diplomas in plastic surgery are not valid for national certification and licensure in the country.

There is no doubt that in this situation a lot of complaints appear concerning those who refer to themselves as plastic surgeons as well as against plastic surgery on the whole. Surgeons without proper training advertise in the mass media as experts in the field of aesthetic plastic surgery, and especially in the late 1990s, were offering many procedures that were not medically and scientifically approved. Among these were injections of fibroblasts of unknown origin and so called “stem cells” without any verification of the product. Those injections were made at any time of the day, even during house calls. In this situation, the medical community could only support the law that appeared in 2004

limiting application of new procedures, especially in plastic surgery and cosmetology. But local medical bureaucrats began using this law against all the specialists thus demonstrating their power over them with an obvious strong will to manipulate physicians and private interests mostly for monetary benefits.

The branch of the Ministry of Health Care called ROSZDRAVNADZOR (Supervision Over Health Care) insists that they should approve ANY kind of surgical procedure. Bureaucrats in this organization require registration of each procedure including meticulous written explanation of the stages and all the equipment and medication used. ROSZDRAVNADZOR postulates that it is now necessary to approve all surgical procedures from the regular textbooks including appendectomy. According to them, even historical stomach resection after Bilrot should be approved because new sutures (PGA or Vicryl instead of Catgut) are applied. The change of any prescription in approved surgical technology (for example from Vicryl to Dexon, from Fraxiparin to Clexan, from blade 10 to blade 15) is illegal unless it is defended as a new technology. Companies that bring new equipment to Russia have to pass through certification of their devices and also register the new technology for its specific application. In the list of approved technologies, one can find plenty of similar explanations of the same technologies; for example, skin resurfacing procedures for the lasers of different providers. So every surgeon who has a slight modification of surgery must register it individually. It is a very time-consuming process and includes a lot of paper work. For instance, surgical activities at the oldest and the largest Institute of Plastic Surgery in Moscow were blocked for almost three months because the director of that institute ordered his employees to write descriptions for all the surgical technologies they use in aesthetic practice. That paper work was waiting for the approval of ROSZDRAVNADZOR for one year.

In a country where the quality of surgery depends on government-approved technologies, most plastic surgery procedures appear to be illegal and most surgeons are not defended in court. Surprisingly, some old and even ridiculous procedures that were described in official letters of the Ministry of Health Care in the

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past such as breast enlargement via polyacrylamide gel (PAAG) injections and Joseph rhinoplasty technique are approved by the new authorities. But breast augmentation, with modern silicone breast implants and open non-destructive rhinoplasty, are not registered as legal medical technologies in Russia. It is difficult to believe, but it’s true that hand massage of the head was recently approved as a new medical technology.

The international plastic surgery community is aware of malpractice by their colleagues all over the world. But international opinion should take into account that nowadays, nearly all world-wide recognized plastic surgical procedures are not recognized by the medical authorities in the Russian Federation. Creation of an advisory committee, organized by the members of the national plastic surgery society for the Ministry of Health Care, could be helpful in the problem of legislation of plastic surgery procedures in the Russian Federation.

Discussion of legislation affecting plastic surgery in five additional ISAPS member countries will be the focus of the first of three panels during the Global Summit on Patient Safety on Saturday, August 14, preceding the ISAPS Congress in San Francisco.

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