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Learning English through Popular Culture

The human desire to look attractive is universal and because of this, cosmetic surgery is now a multi-million dollar industry. Write a letter to the editor of the Hong Kong Express about the obsession with physical beauty.

By: Edward Chau

Dear Editor,

In view of the escalating number of medical blunders in relation to cosmetic surgery in the territory in the past few months, I am writing to bring its adverse consequences into the limelight and to give suggestions on how to curb the rising tide of people obsessed with cosmetic surgery. Before that, I will first explain why more and more people are going for cosmetic surgery.

There are several reasons accounting for the phenomenon, with the pursuit of physical attractiveness being the prime one. Under the influence of the mass media and the notable success of good-looking celebrities, there is a widespread notion that physical attractiveness is the key to success, if not instant fame. With this mindset, more and more people set foot into cosmetic surgery companies. Some do so because they crave for a better self-image, so that they could be more confident in social settings while others do so because they want to follow in the footsteps of their idols who are mostly celebrated singers or famed actors with an appealing look. It is no wonder that cosmetic surgery is now a multi-million dollar industry and it is bound to thrive in the future.

Yet, such an obsession with physical beauty will do harm to both individuals and society. Regarding the personal impact, the most obvious one is the detrimental effect brought by cosmetic surgery to one's physical health. The surgery operation requires a high level of expertise and the doctor must have undergone a series of professional training in order to become a registered cosmetic surgeon. Under the backdrop of a limited supply of registered surgeon each year but a burgeoning demand for cosmetic surgery due to the obsession with physical beauty, there are in fact many unprofessional or substandard plastic surgery companies and beauticians flooding the industry. They tend to attract customers with a cheaper surgery fee and a shorter recovery time. For those who opt for these companies, they are nothing but putting their own physical health at risk as those untrained beauticians are not only ignorant about the operation and the safety precautions, they also lack sanitary

and professional equipment. This has fully explained why the number of medical accidents resulting from cosmetic surgery is on an alarming increase.

Aside from harming one's physical health, the obsession with beauty also has an impact on our society. The blind pursuit of outer beauty and physical attractiveness in fact jeopardizes our social values, which emphasize inner beauty. If the public are preoccupied by the pursuit of an appealing appearance and attach little importance to the essence of being courteous, humble and respectful to others, our society will be less harmonious and will become more depraved.

In light of the gravity of the obsession with physical beauty, the government should take some measures to cope with the trend.

To start with, in order to reduce the number of medical accidents involving aesthetic procedures, the government should raise the penalty for those cosmetic companies or personnel who work without a license. Also, for the sake of public health, the government should strengthen the laws regulating the cosmetic surgery industry and crack down on those that are below standard. Moreover, moral education about the importance of inner beauty and personal qualities should be included in the current curriculum so as to ensure the passing on of the traditional virtues and let students know there are more to assessing a person than physical beauty.

Indeed, the crave for physical attractiveness is human nature, yet it should by no means go too far to become an obsession that would put one's health, as well as the moral standard of our society, in peril. It is my genuine hope that with the government efforts, such an unhealthy trend can be halted soon.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong