

ASAPS and ASPS Issue Joint Position Statement on Stem Cells and Fat Grafting

Stem cells in aesthetic surgery promising, but marketing claims are too far ahead of the science

Boston, MA (May 9, 2011) – A joint task force of the two leading plastic surgery associations, the **American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS)** and the **American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS)**, today released a position statement on the use of stem cells in aesthetic surgery during **The Aesthetic Meeting 2011**, the annual meeting of ASAPS. Based on a systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature, the task force concluded that while there is tremendous potential for the future use of stem cells in aesthetic surgical procedures, **the scientific evidence and other data are very limited in terms of assessing the safety or efficacy of stem cell therapies in aesthetic medicine.** The task force, led by plastic surgeon and noted expert on fat-derived stem cells, J. Peter Rubin, MD, of the University of Pittsburgh, was convened to address the growing concerns emerging from the plastic surgery community over advertising claims and clinical practices using stem cells that have not been substantiated by scientific evidence.

“There are encouraging data from laboratory and clinical studies to suggest that the use of adult stem cells is a very promising field,” said Dr. Rubin, “but as our comprehensive review of the current scientific literature shows, the data available today do not substantiate the marketing claims being made to patients seeking aesthetic surgery and aesthetic medical treatments.”

Based on the current state of knowledge, the task force made the following recommendations to ASAPS/ASPS members and their patients:

- **Terms such as "stem cell therapy" or "stem cell procedure" should be reserved** to describe those treatments or techniques where the collection, concentration, manipulation, and therapeutic action of the stem cells is the primary goal, rather than a passive result, of the treatment. For example, standard fat grafting procedures that do transfer some stem cells naturally present within the tissue should be described as fat grafting procedures, not stem cell procedures.
- **The marketing and promotion of stem cell procedures in aesthetic surgery is not adequately supported by clinical evidence at this time.**
- While stem cell therapies have the potential to be beneficial for a variety of medical applications, a substantial body of clinical data to assess plastic surgery applications still needs to be collected. Until further evidence is available, **stem cell therapies** in aesthetic and reconstructive surgery **should be conducted within clinical studies under Institutional Review Board approval**, including compliance with all guidelines for human medical studies.
- **The collection and reporting of data on outcomes and safety** by any physician performing stem cell therapies is strongly encouraged in order to advance the knowledge and science of stem cells.
- **Stem cell based procedures should be performed in compliance with FDA regulatory guidelines.** If devices are employed that are subject to regulation by the FDA, surgeons should

use these devices with appropriate approval in place, especially when used for investigational purposes.

- **Patients are advised to seek consultation for aesthetic procedures by a surgeon certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery.** These physicians are able to properly evaluate a patient's concerns and offer a wide range of safe solutions. Extreme caution should be exercised when a physician is promising results from any treatment that sound too good to be true.

"While we remain enthusiastic about the future potential of stem cell therapies in aesthetic surgical procedures, unsubstantiated claims for such therapies will harm patients and tarnish the reputation of the industry," said Felmont F. Eaves III, MD, ASAPS President. "This joint position statement will provide guidance for our members, the public and the media."

"This systematic review brings into sharp focus the fact that the marketing for stem cell therapies in aesthetic surgery is pushing far ahead of the current science," added Phil Haeck, MD, ASPSP President.

"Understandably, there is considerable public enthusiasm over the potential for stem cell treatments in plastic surgery. However, we need to keep our patients' best interests in mind, which means being committed to supporting evidence-based medicine, not unsubstantiated claims. We eagerly await the evidence showing that stem cells treatments are safe and effective in this field."

About the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS)

The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), is recognized as the world's leading organization devoted entirely to aesthetic plastic surgery and cosmetic medicine of the face and body. ASAPS is comprised of over 2,600 Plastic Surgeons; active members are certified by the [American Board of Plastic Surgery \(USA\)](#) or by the [Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada](#) and have extensive training in the complete spectrum of surgical and non-surgical aesthetic procedures. International active members are certified by equivalent boards of their respective countries. All members worldwide adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and must meet stringent membership requirements. www.surgery.org.

About the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS)

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) is the largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons in the world. Representing more than 7,000 physician members, the Society is recognized as a leading authority and information source on cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery. ASPS comprises more than 94 percent of all board-certified plastic surgeons in the United States. Founded in 1931, the Society represents physicians certified by [The American Board of Plastic Surgery](#) or [The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada](#). www.plasticsurgery.org

About ASAPS

[The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery \(ASAPS\)](#), is recognized as the world's leading organization devoted entirely to aesthetic plastic surgery and cosmetic medicine of the face and body. ASAPS is comprised of over 2,600 Plastic Surgeons; active members are certified by the [American Board of Plastic Surgery \(USA\)](#) or by the [Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada](#) and have extensive training in the complete spectrum of surgical and non-surgical aesthetic procedures. International active

members are certified by equivalent boards of their respective countries. All members worldwide adhere to a strict [Code of Ethics](#) and must meet stringent membership requirements.

Website: www.surgery.org

Follow ASAPS on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ASAPS

Become a fan of ASAPS on Facebook: www.facebook.com/AestheticSociety

Become a member of Project Beauty: www.projectbeauty.com

Locate a plastic surgeon in your area: <http://www.surgery.org/consumers/find-a-plastic-surgeon>