



### ► **Understanding BDD sufferers' expectations of treatments...**

As a practitioner it is important that you try to identify potential clients who may have body image disturbance and BDD for both surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures. The skill lies in identifying those individuals who would benefit and, more importantly, those who would not benefit from these cosmetic procedures.

Those who suffer from BDD are likely to have very high expectations of treatments and procedures that are often unrealistic. With increasing media focus on 'celebrity' it may be difficult for someone who has BDD to understand why they can't look this way, and assume that a treatment or procedure or two is the answer to all their problems, changing their appearance dramatically and suddenly making all their worries disappear.

No matter how well the treatment or procedure goes, it is never going to meet their unrealistic expectations and therefore could cause further distress to the individual.

As the saying goes, "beauty is only skin deep," but of course that "skin" matters. Aesthetics are

important and as practitioners the aim is to help people achieve their goals of looking and feeling better about what they present to the world every day.

Professor Glenn Callaghan states: 'It is important to remember that there is a "deep" there too, which includes values and self-worth. That depth for some is a real struggle and what you can offer will not ease that level of pain.'

It is possible to help those individuals who struggle and who are not fit for aesthetic and cosmetic procedures by choosing not to treat them and instead redirecting them to professionals, who are better placed and qualified to assist with psychological difficulties.



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### **When is it OK to say no?**

When seeing a client for a consultation it is imperative to fully understand their reasons for choosing to undergo procedures and treatments. If that individual is generally satisfied with life and their goals are genuinely aesthetic, then they are likely to be satisfied with the outcome or result of their treatment. However, if that individual believes that a specific aesthetic procedure will either make them a better person or will significantly change their lives for the better; then they are more than likely to be dissatisfied with any procedure or treatment performed. What's more, if a person is struggling with high levels of body image disturbance, the likelihood is that proceeding to treat them could worsen their condition.

Individuals with this condition often have a history of multiple procedures and treatments in an effort to achieve some impossible goal, namely a level of self-worth that a cosmetic treatment could never satisfy. This is not an uncommon occurrence. Dr Irfan Mian, Cosmetic Doctor at Chinbrook Medical Cosmetic Centre, recalls: 'One particular case I remember was of a female aged 23 years who was very attractive, slim and appeared happy and jovial. She wanted her lip volume increased and I agreed that this could be done.'

'I carried out the procedure and the before and after photos showed a good improvement. The patient, however, was not happy and said she wanted her lips to be made bigger. I carried out an additional volume enhancement to what I considered to be the maximum at a further cost to the patient. Her lips were now almost 2-3 times bigger, although much of this was tissue fluid swelling which would reduce over the next few days.'

'To my surprise the patient wanted even bigger lips at which point I refused and informed her that I had put in the maximum amount of filler which I considered to be safe. The patient was insistent she wanted more and was even willing to pay me more than my usual fee. Again I refused.'

## The facts

- Affects one in 100 people
- More likely to develop during teenage years
- Affects more females than males
- Can occur alongside OCD, eating disorders and anxiety disorders

### **Treatment methods:**

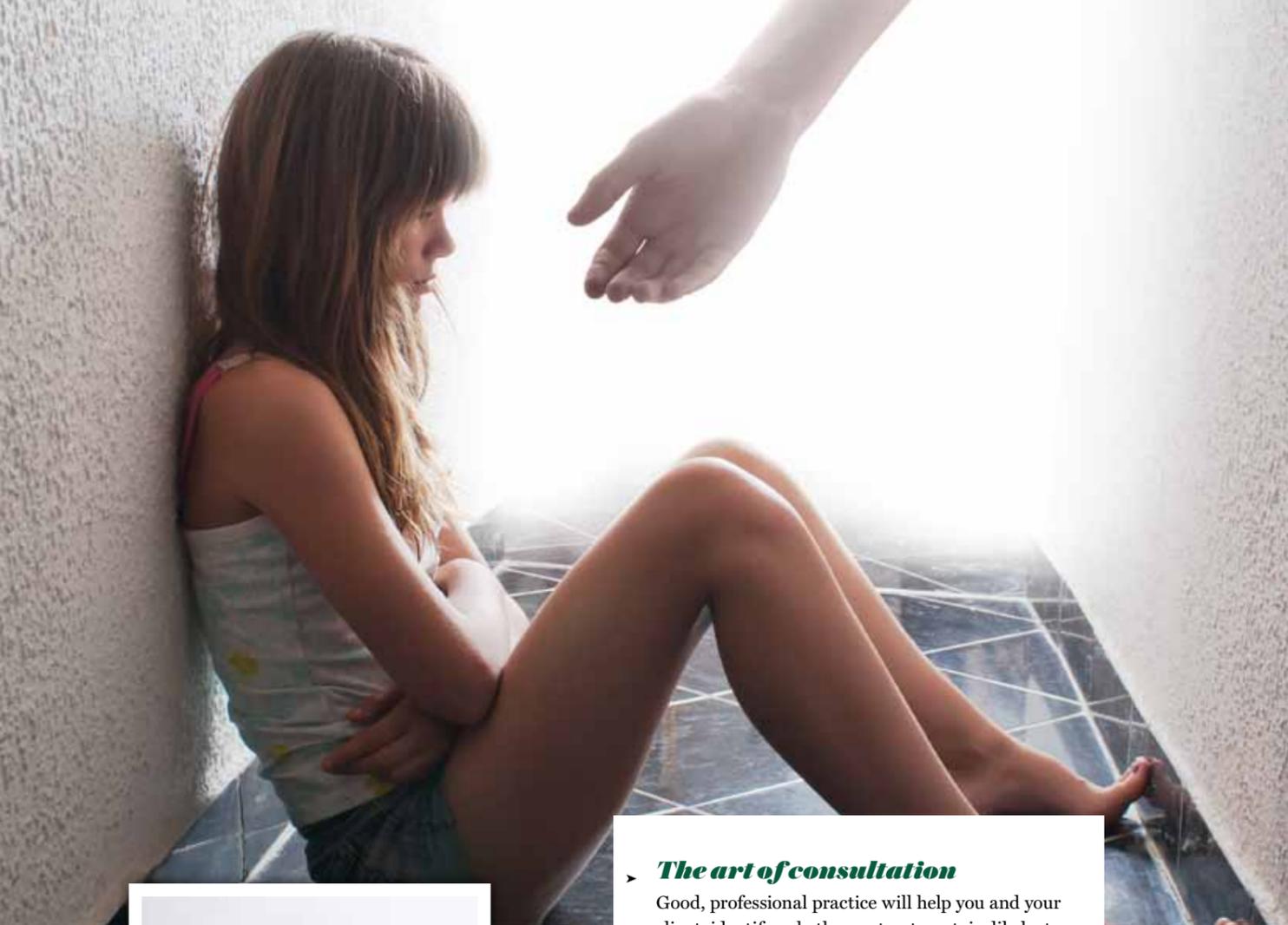
- Antidepressants
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
- Clomipramine and antipsychotics

### **BDD behavioural symptoms:**

- Constantly comparing own looks to others'
- Searching for constant reassurance
- Secretive behaviour
- Obsession with diet and exercise
- Spending a long time applying make-up and styling hair
- Seeking to have cosmetic treatments and cosmetic surgery.

### **Treatments BDD sufferers may seek to have:**

- Micro-pigmentation
- Laser hair removal
- Anti-ageing treatments
- Scar and stretch mark reduction
- Vein removal and broken vein treatment
- Slimming and cellulite treatment
- Birthmark removal
- Chemical peels



► **The art of consultation**

Good, professional practice will help you and your client identify whether a treatment is likely to produce satisfactory results. Your job cannot be to remedy or alleviate their BDD or other body image problems, but you can have a conversation with clients and even use some assessment tools to help them and you recognise when a treatment may not give them the desired result they are seeking.

In addition, you can also discuss the broader options available to your clients; even those procedures or treatments you may not offer.

It's worth remembering the usefulness of standard aspects of a consultation such as:

- Fully understanding your client's requirements
- Effective record keeping
- Identifying contra-indicated clients
- Multi-layered informed consent forms
- Pre- and post-support for procedures if applicable.

Through conversation you should be able to identify how the client wants to be perceived and what their goals are from the cosmetic treatment. This is where the real psychology of the client can become more evident. 'I want to look younger' is a reasonable answer to the question about their desired goal for treatment. However, it should be possible to clarify for the client the difference between achieving a slightly younger "look", given their age, and "being younger". The latter of these two goals is obviously unrealistic and, ultimately, unachievable.



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As a therapist whilst you might not be administering lifelong changes in the form of cosmetic procedures, due to patient's high expectations it is still possible that even through minor treatments the patient's condition could be worsened.

The compassion and empathy you show towards your clients matters. What is important is to help the client understand that the proposed procedure is purely aesthetic and cannot solve any deeper issues they may have. A cosmetic procedure may potentially make us feel better about our nose, our hair or our skin, but it will not make us more acceptable to ourselves as a person.

You are not seeking to make an in-depth psychological evaluation of the client, but you are looking to help the client understand the reason they are seeking your services and whether that procedure will realistically help them achieve their goals.

The benefits to having advanced consultation skills are many. Not only can you minimise the risk of treating clients who are potentially psychologically not suitable for cosmetic and aesthetic treatments and who ultimately will be dissatisfied with any treatment performed but, through a more comprehensive and open dialogue at the consultation stage, it is possible to develop stronger bonds and relationships.

Debra Morris at BABTAC & CIBTAC says: 'As the choice and selection for treatment options on offer become more advanced in their nature, the need to enhance our knowledge of effective consultation techniques is key to delivering effective and realistic goals for all therapy treatments. The professional therapist should recognise the need to ensure they are up to date and have thorough knowledge to enhance their abilities.'

In response to public demand for regulated standards and in light of the Keogh report, Glenn Callaghan and Anouska Cassano have developed 'Advanced Consultation Technique (ACT)', a course to give training in advanced consultation and to help minimise the risks to the clients and the practitioner in this progressive and transitional stage of the industry. The course will launch in September 2014 and is endorsed by BABTAC & CIBTAC.



**Dr Glenn Callaghan**

Dr Glenn Callaghan is professor of psychology at San Jose State University. He is training director of the clinical psychology graduate program and director of the Centre for Innovative Assessment and Treatment at SJSU. His research covers clinical problems related to depression, body image disturbance, and personality disorders as well as interpersonal behaviour therapy. He is the author of multiple peer-reviewed articles and book chapters and has co-authored two books.



**Anouska Cassano**

Anouska Cassano is a highly experienced micro-pigmentation practitioner specialising in the areas of scalp micro-pigmentation, aesthetic permanent makeup, medical and reconstructive (areola restoration, vitiligo, cleft lip reconstruction, asymmetry, burns), scar camouflage and reduction (MCA dry needling), chemical tattoo removal and correction.



She is widely considered an expert within her field and was invited by BABTAC & CIBTAC to be a technical expert where she advises on all technical aspects of micro-pigmentation and new course approvals.