

## **Boomers put a new face on their careers**

*As more turn to cosmetic procedures to reduce signs of their advancing years, they say it's all about seeking an edge in their jobs, MARJO JOHNE finds*

MARJO JOHNE - Special to The Globe and Mail  
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When Lucy Pappa meets her company's customers and suppliers, she often feels their eyes checking out her face and skin.

But Ms. Pappa is used to the scrutiny. She is, after all, executive vice-president of Canderm Pharma Inc., the Montreal-based company that makes the NeoStrata brand of anti-aging skincare products.

"I'm in the business of skin care," says Ms. Pappa, who is 46. "So when I go to talk to a buyer or a cosmetician, naturally they'll be looking at my skin."

And that's just fine with Ms. Pappa, who has taken steps to ensure it stands up to their expectations. In recent years, she's had her lips and facial wrinkles smoothed with injectable fillers that Canderm sells. She's now considering having her cheeks sculpted with another Canderm product.

"This isn't about vanity; this is about being the best that you can be," she says. "If you feel you're aging poorly. . . then why not do something about it?"

Ms. Pappa isn't the only one feeling that way. A growing number of Canadians are doing something about the sagging skin, receding hairlines, yellowing teeth and other signs of their advancing years.

And in a lot of cases, cosmetic surgeons say, the business is from boomers who want to turn back time -- or at least look like they are -- for the sake of their careers.

More than half -- 53 per cent -- of 21,566 people who answered an on-line survey at job-search website Monster.com, part of Monster Worldwide Inc., said they believed that having plastic surgery or cosmetic dental work would help advance their career.

Cosmetic surgeons are seeing evidence of that in the flesh. "I've been in practice for a long time and we never used to see people who had job-related issues -- it used to be pure vanity," says Dr. Sheldon Pollack, a cosmetic dermatologist in Toronto.

"Now there's people coming because they want to look good for their job because they feel it might give them an edge."

Dr. Jean Carruthers, who has a cosmetic surgery practice in Vancouver, agrees.

"A lot of [boomer] patients come to me and say 'I hope you can do something for me because I'm afraid I might get passed over for a promotion.' "

It's not just women. Dr. Yves Hébert, a Montreal-based general practitioner who performs cosmetic medical procedures, notes an increasing number of male clients, and attributes this to a more cut-throat work world.

"We do a lot of liposuction of the stomach and sides in men, as well as injectables and hair transplants," he says.

"A lot of them are in their late 50s, early 60s, and it's a very fragile period in their business life because they feel they have to stay competitive and, to do that, you have to look young."

Certainly, the numbers turning to cosmetic procedures have grown. One survey of about 550 doctors across Canada found a 30-per-cent increase in the number of Botox treatments, collagen injections and surgical and non-surgical facelifts performed in 2005 over 2004 -- more than 275,000 compared with about 211,000.

When other types of cosmetic procedures, such as liposuction, hair transplants, rhinoplasties, breast implants and skin resurfacing treatments, were taken into account, the study by Medicard Finance Inc. concluded that Canadians in 2005 subjected themselves to almost 643,000 cosmetic procedures, excluding cosmetic dental work.

The study by Medicard, a Toronto company that lends money for elective medical procedures, attributes more than 70 per cent of such procedures to a broad age group that starts at 35 and ends at 50.

But many doctors say all this nip-tuck-and-fill action is largely a baby boom phenomenon.

It's certainly easier these days to achieve a more youthful look.

Got 30 minutes to spare? Drop by your doctor's office for a "lunchtime peel" or a quick collagen injection to fill those wrinkles on your forehead, or the creases alongside your nose and mouth. Some of the new filler products are so advanced they leave no swelling or red marks.

Not only are such non- or minimally invasive procedures quicker to have done and easier and faster to recover from, but they cost much less than more extensive surgeries.

For instance, Dr. Carruthers says her clinic charges \$300 to \$400 to smooth furrowed eyebrows with Botox. The average price for a surgical brow lift is \$4,000, according to the Canadian Society for Aesthetic (Cosmetic) Surgery.

Cosmetic dentistry is also on the rise as many boomers try to update their smiles. In a survey last year by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, more than 30 per cent of dentists said boomers are fuelling the growing demand for such cosmetic dental procedures as teeth bleaching, putting bonding or veneers on worn tooth surfaces and getting new crowns and bridges.

Dr. Neil Elman, a dentist and partner at Willow Dental Associates in Toronto, sees the U.S. trend reflected in his practice. He says many of his boomer patients are asking for cosmetic procedures that range from simple tooth whitening to complete smile makeovers.

"I am seeing a portion of my patients who are boomers that are very conscious of how their teeth look and who feel that a nice smile can help them be taken more seriously in their job," he says.

Teal McAteer-Early, who teaches organizational behaviour and human resources management ethics at McMaster University in Hamilton, says it isn't just boomers' advancing years; it's also their personalities. Many boomers are "aggressive-defensive" Type A personalities, who want to have their own way and who see life as a game that must be won at all costs.

"These would be the people who say 'What can I do now at all costs to put myself in a positively perceived place in the job market?' And if that means having to go out and getting these cosmetic

procedures done, then they'll do it."

But do employers judge their workers' ability to do the job according to how old they look, or are some boomers merely reading their own insecurities into an employer's decision to hire or promote someone else?

Sarah Welstead, managing partner at Retired Worker Canada, a Toronto-based company that runs an employment website for older workers, says boomers are right to worry about appearing old to employers, having seen evidence of ageism in the workplace.

Even companies that recognize the value of mature and more experienced workers still want employees whose look is current, Ms. Welstead says. Most people take this to mean up-to-date clothes and hair, but they shouldn't overlook their skin and teeth, she adds.

"Teeth, especially, is a real problem because they can make you look old if they're stained and have wires around them holding your bridge work," she says.

Dr. Hébert calls the situation "sad because we should be relying more on competence than physical beauty, but that's the way it is."

But Kelly Green, a managing partner at corporate recruiting firm Head2Head Inc. in Toronto, says that while many companies have a "shyness" about hiring workers over a certain age, a reluctance to hire older workers isn't always about how people look.

"I will say that age is obviously a determining factor in consideration, but this is almost as much tied to the person's energy level, youthfulness, the sparkle in their eye," she says. "If you're able to demonstrate that you still have the energy level to succeed, then you're over one of the humps."

And if a shot of Botox can help push you over those humps, is it so bad? "Let's not look at bad or good, let's look at healthy or unhealthy," Ms. McAteer-Early says.

"I don't think it's unhealthy to get a little bit of Botox to enhance your self-confidence, but it does become unhealthy when you start saying 'I need the Botox to get the job.'"

Ms. Pappa agrees. Were she to apply for a job today, she believes the person interviewing her would be unlikely to hire her because of her youthful skin. Rather, Ms. Pappa thinks it'd be because of her skills, experience, and the confidence she projects.

Nevertheless, that confidence exists, in part, she admits, because of the improvements she's made to her appearance.

"Personally what I feel [the cosmetic procedures] have done is given me this firmer spine so I can stand taller and be less self-conscious," she says. "People often tell me I'm a vibrant person and I don't think it's personality alone -- I think it has a lot to do with how I feel about the way I look."

### **Looking younger**

Think a more youthful image could boost your career, but would rather pass on the fillers and face lifts? Career and image experts offer tips on how to look younger, or at least current, without cosmetic procedures:

**Update your working wardrobe.** Still got that three-piece suit from the eighties hanging in your closet? Even so-called "classic fashions" can make you look dated because of their cut and silhouettes, says Sarah Welstead, managing partner of Retired Worker Canada. She recommends

buying a new set of business basics and adding a few trendy pieces each season.

**Do a colour check.** The same colours that used to flatter you may now make you look washed out, says Linda Allan, a partner at Image International Inc. in Toronto. "As you grow older, your skin can get more sallow so colours start to look different on you. Review the colours in your wardrobe to see how they now look against your skin."

**Raise those brows.** If a brow lift or Botox injection isn't part of your career plan, a brow-shaping session at a salon or spa may be.

"Well-shaped brows can really lift a person's eyes," says Benjamin Tkatch owner of Woman The Salon in Oakville, Ont.

Daniel Francoeur, owner of Bodé Spa in Ottawa, says more men 35 to 50 are getting their eyebrows waxed, plucked and trimmed. "A lot of men start to get long, unruly hair on their eyebrows when they get to a certain age," he says. "Also, they get hair coming out of their ears and nose and they ask us to clean that up that too."

**Look into new eyewear.** Contemporary-looking glasses can take a few years off, Ms. Allan says. "People sometimes think they can keep their glasses for 10 years or more," she says. "But styles change -- and quickly. People should think of updating their glasses every few years."

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