



The Quest for Eternal Youth

Plastic surgery is a blend of science and aesthetics. *linda hayes* checks in at the Aspen Institute of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery.

EVER SINCE THE DAYS of the famous alpine spas, travelers have ventured to the mountains for rejuvenation and consultations with noted health experts. In Aspen, that would include Dr. Dennis P. Cirillo. He began his medical career with general surgery (specializing in chest and open heart surgery), followed by a successful practice as a plastic surgeon in Manhattan. In 1993 he founded the Aspen Institute of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, having noticed that the area was a promising place for a doctor in his field. “When I opened the practice 18 years ago,” he says, “the Aspen population lent itself to looking vital and good no matter what the age. Plus, people came here from Miami, New York, Chicago, Dallas, Houston. There was potential of attracting people to this wonderful place for surgery and recuperation—to stay on after the season to have a little something done. That’s the way it’s ended up.”

A few years ago, with the idea of dialing down and focusing on the procedures that interest him most—face-lifts, eyelid and nasal surgeries—Cirillo sold his practice to a newcomer to Aspen, Dr. W. Jason Martin. Just 36 years old, with a boyish grin and see-all blue eyes, Martin bears impeccable credentials. Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, he followed a general surgery residency and plastic surgery fellowship at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago with postsurgical training in cosmetic surgery at the renowned Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital.

“Dr. Martin is well trained and has the best interest of his patients at heart,” says Cirillo. “His presence will help build the practice even bigger.”

Martin himself—who is also chairman of the department of surgery at Aspen Valley Hospital, where he performs most of his operations, and on the board of Komen Aspen—paints a more ambitious picture. “I represent what big, higher-end plastic surgery practices would be like,” he says. “In Manhattan, I was doing mostly cosmetic surgery. Here, I can do the reconstructive work—like facial fractures from skiing, hand surgery, breast reconstruction—that I was trained to do and that nobody else is doing. I can change people’s lives and help them immensely.”

Today most of Martin’s practice is taken up with face-lifts, eyelid and nasal surgery, breast augmentation, and SmartLipo (a new laser body-sculpting procedure with less downtime and fewer side effects than traditional liposuction). His training in reconstructive surgery, especially for breast cancer patients, is quickly growing that area as well.

Patients naturally bring to these two aspects of surgery very different sets of expectations. “The most common reason for plastic surgery is self-perception,” Martin says. “It comes from when you’re standing in front of the mirror, looking at something that really bothers you, and want to have an improvement in that area. In reconstructive surgery, people have issues they’re born with, or trauma. Surgery makes them feel whole again.”

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

For those simply interested in keeping age at bay, lasers—which, Martin notes, have made significant strides over the past decade—may be used alone or in conjunction with surgical procedures. Within the Valley, the Cutera lasers Martin uses are exclusive to his clinic. Lasers are the treatment of choice for everything from brown spots and broken capillaries to skin resurfacing, a technique that helps remove fine lines, even out skin texture, and repair sun damage while tightening the skin by stimulating new collagen production.

Injectables are the other noninvasive tool in wide use today. The best-known, of course, is Botox, which helps improve the appearance of deep lines in the forehead and softens the area around the eyes. Also popular are fillers such as Juvéderm, Restylane, and Radiesse, which literally fill in and plump up facial lines, especially around the nose and at the edges of the mouth.

Even though treatments such as these are technically outside the realm of surgery, Martin points out the advantages of obtaining them from a trained surgeon. “There are some people in town who are very good at what they do, like basic skincare and Botox,” he says. “But as a Board-certified plastic surgeon, I have a hard time understanding how someone who has never seen the muscles they’re injecting with Botox even knows where those muscles are and how deep they are in the skin—or if you’re doing filler and you haven’t done a face-lift, to see what it’s like underneath the skin. It’s a true gift to actually see the anatomy in real time.”

In addition to techniques and technologies that are less invasive and therefore speed recovery time, Martin employs what he calls a “new school” approach, in contrast to “the days of ‘I’m the expert and this is what we’re doing, you talk with the doctor for 10 minutes and then you’re out.’ Those days are over,” says Martin. “Here, I sit down with patients and talk kids, lifestyle, medical history, activity levels, sun exposure. We have a comfortable conversation about what they really want to accomplish. Then it’s my job to find a program that fits.”

How do you choose a treatment? The choice, Martin says, may be influenced by a number of things, from the desired effect a patient wants to the amount of recovery time he or she can afford. Often it’s influenced by something as mundane as the time of year. “In season, when people are skiing or biking or going to the music tent, laser treatments, ViPeels, and microdermabrasion are popular,” he says. “Off season, it’s face-lifts.”

As the clinic’s reputation has grown, so has the practice. Martin estimates that some 30 to 40 percent of his patients are nonlocal, including second-home owners from California, Texas, Florida, and New York. “Aspen has that approachable quality,” he says. “People can come here and hide out. They can come in the back door and stay at The Little Nell, with private nurses to assist them post-op. It benefits us that Aspen is a place everyone wants to visit.” **A**



NEW FACE IN TOWN: W. Jason Martin M.D. of the Aspen Institute of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery left life in the big city for a practice in the mountains.

A Choice of Treatments

Part of a cosmetic surgeon’s job is helping patients weed through all the options to find what will work best for them. “Even in a well-educated community like this, people can be confused by trends and what they see offered,” says Dr. Martin. “I can tell you that 95 percent of what you see on the Internet and in magazines does not work. Threadlift, which was in vogue a few years ago, does not work. Skin-tightening devices like Fraxyl are useful but tend to be very painful, with notable redness and swelling, and have a prolonged recovery time. In the next ten years, there may be external devices that can tighten the skin and help people avoid surgery, but we’re not there yet.”

At the Aspen Institute of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, Martin relies on the assistance of medically trained clinical aestheticians—including Casey Baty, Christine Assalone, and Amy Kilian—to perform a wide range of skincare procedures. Treatments include:

- » Cleansing and hydrating facials (\$120)
- » Microdermabrasion (\$140), which utilizes a device that sprays tiny crystals across the face, mixing gentle abrasion with suction to remove the dead outer layer of skin
- » Peels such as Obagi Blue Peel (\$500), Glycolic Peel (\$175), and—the most popular—ViPeel (\$225), a moderate peel developed to treat hyperpigmentation, acne scarring, enlarged pores, and fine lines, and to improve tone and clarity
- » Medical-grade skincare products such as Obagi, ColorScience, and Epionce, along with Youngblood Mineral Cosmetics.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ASPEN INSTITUTE OF PLASTIC & RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY