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A cut above

Computers revolutionize face lifts

MARY T. FORTNEY / STAFF
PALO ALTO

When Dr. Harry Mittelman showed slides of face lifts he had done using implants, the other plastic surgeon at the medical meeting was impressed.

That's unusual, Mittelman said. Plastic surgeons usually aren't impressed by their colleagues' work because they always feel they could do a better job themselves.

Mittelman, who has a patent pending on chin and chin-jowl implants, said that contouring with a facial implant makes the difference in a face lift.

Facial contouring with implants to make patients appear more youthful and attractive will be the new trend in face lifts of the 1990s, he predicted.

And it's not just chin or chin-jowl implants.

The four California plastic surgeons, including Mittelman, who are the nation's leaders in facial contouring have made provisions for every part of the face.

Want high cheek bones like television star Linda Evans? Dr. Ed Terino of Agoura Hills, near Los Angeles, has perfected a malar implant that builds up cheek bones.

Looking haggard and gaunt, like Abraham Lincoln? A submalar implant developed by Dr. William Binder of Los Angeles will correct that.

Dr. Larry D. Schoenrock of San Francisco and Santa Rosa designed implants that can be used on the cheek, temple,

Please see LIFT, B-10



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Dr. Harry Mittelman (left) and Nurse Terry Silverman work on a chin implant patient.

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LIFT

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forehead and nose. They can be used for a person with a thin face and deepset temples.

The plastic surgeons have a wide range of implants available. Schoenrock, who was planning a face lift last week, was making a choice from among 50 implants of different sizes and shapes.

"This is the hottest new subject in plastic surgery," Binder said. "The interest is unbelievable."

When Mittelman, Binder and Terino gave a course in facial contouring to Los Angeles plastic surgeons recently, there was a standing room-only audience.

Mittelman and Schoenrock presented their implants to about 100 plastic surgeons earlier this month at a Western Region meeting of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery in San Francisco.

(At the San Francisco meeting, Mittelman was presented with the F. Mark Rafaty award for exceptional contributions to the field of plastic surgery of the face. The late Dr. Rafaty had practiced in Palo Alto.)

The boom in facial implants results from improved techniques in using computers to design three-dimensional implants. Implants have been used for a long time, but they were described as "lumps" stuck in place, not natural-looking implants made possible by computerized design.

From there, each of the four

leaders followed their own interests. The implants normally are made of Silastic, a flexible semi-solid.

Mittelman was interested in the grooves in the jawbone between the chin and the jowl that develop with age.

"That was an area of anatomy never described before," he said.

With aging, many people have a reduction in size of the jawbone, along with development of the grooves. Mittelman's implants are tapered thin strips that slide into place through a three-quarter-inch incision under the chin.

When he began developing the implants about five years ago, Mittelman started by evaluating patients who had had face lifts.

"The results were good and the patients were happy," he said. "But something was not created. The skin was tight but the contour of the face was not corrected."

"When I realized what was lacking, I began to think of how to reconstruct it, and studied the anatomy of the aging face and jawbone," he said.

The implants were the result of that study.

Binder reported his submalar implants, which fill in the depression below the cheekbone, are often used for younger patients, between 35 and 50, who "get a gaunt look relatively early on."

A face lift isn't the answer, Binder said. Instead, a submalar implant can give the full, rounded look patients want.

Terino's malar implants to build up the cheekbone are seen as a way to satisfy the desires of people

who want to get with the current admiration for high, rounded cheekbones.

Plastic surgeons like the implants because the facial contouring adds much to a face lift without increasing the time of what is already a lengthy procedure.

In a recent face-lift, Mittelman inserted a chin implant in about 20 minutes, while the total face lift took five hours.

Patients, according to the doctors, are delighted by the appearance achieved through facial contouring. There also is another plus — the implants make the face lifts last longer.

Mittelman said they add about \$1,000 to \$1,500 to the cost of a face lift, which currently ranges from \$4,000 to \$9,000. He added that a couple plastic surgeons in San Francisco charge from \$15,000 to \$18,000.

There are relatively few adverse side effects to the implants. Mittelman said rejection occurs rarely with the Silastic implants. Patients may feel some numbness and tingling for a while after surgery but that's temporary.

Binder emphasized, "Facial contouring is an art. That's where teaching comes in."

All four are active in spreading knowledge about implants. In addition to presentations at scientific groups, students at medical schools are learning about facial contouring. Schoenrock is director of the facial plastic division at the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of San Francisco. Mittelman, on Schoenrock's invitation, has lectured there.

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Dr. Harry Mittelman prepares to slide a computer-shaped implant through a three-quarter-inch incision under a patient's chin.