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Interview with Dr Barry Lycka & Dr Donald Kress

Dr Barry Lycka cosmetic dermatologist from Edmonton, Alberta is talking today with

Dr Donald Kress board certified plastic surgeon from Frederick, Maryland.

Today Dr Lycka is talking once again with Dr Donald Kress about how to avoid bad cosmetic surgery. Dr Kress has written an Amazon Number One Bestselling Book on this subject called 'Trust Me I'm A Plastic Surgeon'.

Welcome, Dr Kress!

There is a lot of bad plastic surgery out there, isn't there, Dr Kress?

My goodness, YES!

And why is there bad plastic surgery out there?

Well there are lots of reasons but it starts with people who investigate plastic surgery on the internet who believe that that is accurate information when in fact its nothing more than an advertisement and actually its worse than an advertisement because almost all legitimate medical specialties have ethics committees that won't all doctors to post outrageous claims but you can do that at will on the internet and no-one will reprimand you! So that is the first step – people are putting too much emphasis on the information they find on the internet. Dr Lycka thinks that the internet is like a billboard, or a commercial on TV and it really behooves the consumer to really vet the information they find.

Dr Kress totally agrees, and like Dr Lycka, has people regularly going to his office and asking about the latest crazy thing they found on the internet, and asking is it true! It is like the best library but full of garbage cans and its difficult to find the books because of the garbage cans - they all look the same!

In general the University sites tend to be much more reliable in their information. They are toned down because they don't want to make any strong opinions, but it is accurate information. So on any of the major universities, check out plastic surgery and you will get good accurate information, even though it maybe not the latest and greatest. Dr Lycka also encourages people to check out shows such as this (of course !) as his guests are number one experts in their field, and to also get to know their plastic surgeon / their doctor who is going to be actually doing their surgery. The number one determinant of plastic surgery success in 2015 is the choice of your cosmetic doctor.

There are just so many ways that doctors can 'fool' you into thinking that they are the doctor of your dreams! Dr Kress really encourages people to trust their intuition, although that seems to becoming a rarer skill these days. Einstein said, 'intuition isn't something, it's everything' and even Sigmund Freud said that for all important decisions he trusted his intuition. We seem to be learning not to use our intuition. But it is a valuable tool when trying to evaluate a doctor, a practice, or a procedure.

Do doctors rating sites help at all?

Well they seem to get more press than they actually deserve. First of all every doctor is going to get the occasional bad rating. But they can also be manipulated. There is a doctor in an adjacent town to Dr Kress who offers free skin care products in exchange for sitting down with an iPad at his front desk and writing a favorable review. Although he says they are not going to watch over their shoulder while they write it, of course the implication is that a person isn't going to take a free product and write a bad review. So pretty soon they are the number one rated doctor in that part of the country and he is not good at all! But there are so many ways in which those things can be manipulated.

Dr Lycka notes that a doctors rating site errs two ways. Firstly, it gives bad reviews on very good doctors and there is no way to vet out who is giving those reviews. Secondly, there are good reviews on very bad doctors, and again no way of vetting out which are true.

If you are a conscientious surgeon and you refuse a patient, such as asking for inappropriate things, even as politely as you can that you are not prepared to do that and they need to talk to another doctor, then they will go ahead and write a nasty review. Look at Kanye West's mother – she died because she wasn't being conscientious! It took her five plastic surgeons to find the one that finally killed her! So there were 4 out of the 5 that were being honest. But its amazing that 5 out of 5 didn't turn her down because truly a person that is high risk – they are high risk. Exactly and no matter whose mother you are, you just can't overlook that. That is one of the issues with celebrities too. They have such clout and power with their celebrity status that it is very difficult to tell them the truth. You can just go to the grocery store and look at the magazines to see that. Celebrity plastic surgery is a whole category in itself, maybe Dr Kress will write another little book about that subject!

Does going to a doctor's website help to choose if that doctor is really good, or not?

Well it doesn't hurt but you must approach it with scepticism, and recognize that it is another form of advertisement, and recognize that the pictures that you are going to see will be the best work that the doctor has ever done, of course, but you can find out about their education and awards, which of course should be checked on with the hospitals to verify. Approach with a careful eye but there is good information on there if you pursue that information to check it is genuine, just don't believe everything that is on there.

So go in with your intuition, your gut and understand that a doctor is going to tell you certain things to make them look better and also some doctors really won't tell the whole truth, so to speak, especially in the media.

Dr Kress tells people firstly to never, ever take a child with them to a consultation because their intuition will be shot, they will be concerned over the child, and will not be able to glean what the doctor is really saying, sometimes what they need to hear is the stuff between the lines, in facial expressions and way of communicating with them. Dr Kress however, always tells them to take a good friend with them. Then when they leave the doctor's office they can go somewhere, have a drink and compare notes and talk about even the obvious things. Dr Kress remembers a patient who told him about some filler injections that she got which she was unhappy about. Dr Kress asked her about the research she did and she said that when she went into the office, all the staff there had big 'sausage lips' so maybe she should have figured out that that was the doctors aesthetic and if she didn't want sausage lips maybe she shouldn't have gone there! She talked to him, told him she didn't want sausage lips but got them anyway...

Certain doctors get 'locked in' and don't necessarily do the procedure that a person wants but does the procedure that they are comfortable with. That is true, but also doctors do just have different aesthetics. Many times, Dr Kress has people come to his office and tell that they had thought they had had a good meaningful discussion with their doctor about what breast size they wanted, and they come out twice the size they were expecting because the doctor likes big breasts and took it upon himself to change the size at the last minute! Dr Kress also shares a story where a patient told him about the time she went to a neighboring town to consult about breast surgery, and was told by the head person at the desk that the doctor was so busy that she wouldn't get to see him on that visit and that she would be talking to his assistant. The assistant told her that the doctor would choose the size of implant at the time of surgery because he had the better aesthetic. She was also told she would need other extras such as a breast lift and so forth. She realized that she was being scammed and walked out, and went to see Dr Kress instead. He was flabbergasted because she didn't need a lift - that was just an extra \$3000 for something that was unnecessary, and which would have also given her extra scars on her breasts. Dr Kress absolutely lets his patients choose the size of their breasts unless they choose something totally crazy, when he would politely suggest they go to a doctor who specializes in 'monster mammaries' as the term goes these days.

What are a couple of medical office scams that you have seen, Dr Kress?

The most common one is 'the expert'. Years back there was a psychological experiment called the Dr Fox Effect, and they took an actor and announced that they were going to deliver a lecture on string theory as it applied to medicine. They invited psychologists and actual researchers in string theory and 2 experts in the theory worked with the actor to ensure that there was no substance whatsoever in the talk. He gave the 30 minute talk which had been verified as having no content but did it with a huge amount of promotion, and publicity about what an expert he was and being an actor he was able to deliver the presentation with a great deal of flourish. The audience were overwhelmed, they loved it. And afterwards, they questioned the audience, and they knew he was an actor and a complete fraud – they still wanted to know how to get in touch with him to find out more information. Mind Boggling! Another study done at a mid-western US university they had economics students and they did pretty much the same thing although this time they were scanning their brains and they were presented with an expert on investing. Once they had established

the high powered credentials they turned off the sections of their brain that are responsible for decision making. So when you feel you are in the presence of a genuine expert, which even the walls of the office, the staff etc. are doing, you turn off parts of your brain, your intuition shuts down and you don't make a proper decision.

So the expert scam is one of the big ones.

Dr Lycka notes that even in the medical journals, people can publish if they pay to publish. And it does happen more often than people realize. Some of the paid internet journals don't have any form of peer review or really any standards, so it can look like a legitimate publication. Another example of that is a man in New York City who researched around the country to find the best doctor to do his nose. He found a doctor in Oklahoma who had 216 publications and all sorts of memberships and societies, but none of them were genuine, and he went to that doctor, and after 3 years and 22 operations he is left with 2 painful holes in the front of his face and his nose is entirely gone! The guy who claimed to be the best plastic surgeon in Oklahoma, all his credentials were scams, and were publications in throw away journals that didn't amount to anything, not reviewed, and all the societies he belonged to, none of them were properly credentialed.

Dr Lycka finds this over and over – if a person wants to be dishonest, or are dishonest, they will get their message out there and that is the bad thing – it is very hard for our consumers, educated public to get information that can really help them.

The other misconception is that people know in general about the societies and hospitals and credentials and they think that those things are protecting them but the truth is that those things can only protect them if people file complaints against the doctor. So a doctor with a good personality can be doing terrible work but his personality is such that nobody files complaints against them so they keep on hurting and hurting people until finally someone blows the whistle and the societies have to go investigate. Often they will then find the whole history and the amount of damage that has really been going on. Dr Kress always watches the bad plastic surgery shows and thinks that the rule in Florida is that at least 3 people would have to be killed before the state would go and investigate! Amazing! Dr Lycka has also heard that, as well as some terrible things that have happened in certain states over and over again until the person in question finally loses their license. It sometimes should also be considerably more than just losing their license for the damage and destruction they caused.

Florida is famous for ladies with no training whatsoever doing butt augmentations with 'fix a flat' in hotel rooms and after they kill a couple of people then finally the state comes after them. And then they even get it in reverse, because one of these 'fix a flat' ladies who had stuff injected into her butt, got very sick and went to probably the world's top authority on aesthetics of the butt, who has written several books about it. He was trying to clean it out but she skipped a couple of visits and he found out that she had died. She had got septic and didn't go back to him, and yet the state of Florida was going to go after him and wanted to take his license away. Were they crazy? One of the world's experts in that field was trying to help sort out a complete mess yet they had completely mis-read the situation. The original lady who had injected the 'fix a flat' was gone, and yet the doctor who was trying to help, they wanted to take his license away!

Ok Don, we have painted the picture pretty black. And a lot of our listeners are now saying to themselves – OMG How can I really choose a plastic surgeon or a cosmetic doctor that is going to help me, one that I can trust?

Well it starts with proper board certification, which is the American Board Of Medical Specialties. At least if you know they have got board certification you know 2 things. Firstly that at one time they were properly trained, and that they have kept up their education. It doesn't ensure that they have good quality work. That you are going to have to figure out for yourself. Check with the State and local societies to see if they are sanctioned. Dr Kress had a patient from DC who spent \$35,000, had 5 breast surgeries and was so deformed she wouldn't allow her husband to see her, and it was a board certified plastic surgeon who had done that but she didn't check with the State and local societies – if she had done that she would have found out that he had been sanctioned and lost his license multiple times for substance abuse and that it was an ongoing problem with him.

Patients also have to do the proper consultation. Turn up your intuition, know a little bit about the procedures, know some of the scams and recognize those, it is a complicated situation. That is why Dr Kress wrote the whole book, there are scams at every level. Just take something simple. You can save money by going to the plastic surgery resident's clinic. He had a lady who he had seen at consultation for a liposuction and she went down to one of the major east coast universities and she was told she would get her liposuction for a \$1000. So she got her liposuction for a \$1000

but because it was a university hospital they charged her full fare for use of the operating room, for everything else except for the surgery so her surgery ended up costing about 50% more than Dr Kress would have charged her and it was so bad that he had to fix all of the surgery that had been done before him.

But good quality plastic surgery is being done. It is being done by conscientious doctors, with proper credentials who really care about their patients. You just have to take a friend, trust your intuition, do your research and good even excellent results are possible, and are being done every day. Obviously for everything that we see in the newspapers, some horror story, there are literally hundreds of people that are having highly satisfactory surgery. You have to know yourself a little bit too. There are some people who probably shouldn't have plastic surgery – they may be impatient, they are in a hurry, they have an unrealistic deadline, they are a super perfectionist. You should not get angry at the doctor who tells you that it is not a good thing to do.

One of the strongest words in Dr Lycka's book is the word NO. Sometimes we can't do what a patient wants. Dr Kress's old chief used to say that if you are not rejecting 1 out of every 3 or 4 patients because they are not really appropriate then you are not doing them a service. That may be a little high by today's standards because we do have better educated patients but the content is real. If you are a conscientious surgeon / dermatologist and you are doing aesthetic work you just have to say No from time to time.

There are some things we can do and some things we can't do and it behooves doctors as people who have the trust of their patients to take their best interests into account, which may mean saying no to them.

Dr Kress highlights that there are still grey areas out there, such as the stem cell facelift. That is like the early use of lasers as everyone wondered what they could do with lasers because they had such cool sounding names. Now its stem cells that everyone wants to do something with. Research is still a long way from being able to tell us that that definitively works. But people are still being swayed by the internet and the fact that it is really just another form of marketing, no different than the paid ads that are on television.

Are there any final words of advice you would like to give our listeners, Don?

Most important thing is that you have to take responsibility for yourself because there is no government agency or anybody else that is looking out for you. If you want to have good quality plastic surgery you are just going to have to take your time and do it right, don't take other people's word for it. Take all the information yourself and process it and trust your intuition – that is a major thing. Even with all the complications caused by others that Dr Kress is asked to fix virtually to a person the patients will tell him that there was something that just didn't feel right about the doctor's office but they went to so much trouble they just went ahead with the surgery anyway. And that is wrong. They all pretty much knew that there was not a good connection there, there wasn't a meaningful communication and it did go wrong.

That is always wise, Don and its important to trust your gut, as is being informed and having good information and a good relationship with your doctor is really, really, important. Those are the essentials of any cosmetic surgery and if you don't have that then you shouldn't be getting that procedure done.

Dr Kress has one more piece of advice. The other thing that he sees, because about 20% of his practice now is repairing other's mistakes, is that people stay with their doctor too long. It's embarrassing to have to admit that you have made a mistake and the doctor didn't perform the way he was supposed to and isn't treating you correctly, and is trying to charge you more. But what Dr Kress tells his patients is that it should be 'two strikes and you are out'. Any proper plastic surgeon may have to do touch ups from time to time so give them two – but if they are talking about a third procedure then get another opinion. The other opinion may say yes go back to that doctor as they have done a really good job so far but they may also say that it is a mess, and to do something else. So unlike baseball its 2 strikes and you are out and don't stay with the doctor too long who has injured you and don't send other family members to them either! That is crazy.

Exactly!

Dr Kress thank you very much for your insight today – it's always a pleasure to talk to you and congratulations on your book becoming Number One bestseller on Amazon.com.

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