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A Practice of Principles: Plastic Surgeon to the Stars Robert J. Morin, MD

Giving Charitable Surgeries to Babies with Cleft Palates.

By Lauren Clarke-Bennett

Modest is the word that comes to mind when describing plastic surgeon to the stars, Robert J. Morin, MD.

He is quite comfortable when discussing the medical aspect of his practice, but when he is maneuvered into self-touting, an uneasy look permeates his expression... but isn't that refreshing?

In the fast paced and extremely competitive area of New York City where many people are self-promoters, it is comforting to know that in our midst is this elusive quality of modesty.

Having grown up in New Jersey, Dr. Morin went on to The University of Wisconsin for his undergrad studies, then to The New York Medical College for general surgery, taking up a plastic surgery residency back in New Jersey and finishing at The Miami Children's Hospital with a cranial facial surgery and pediatric plastic surgery fellowship.

Realizing his love and gift for facial surgery he naturally went the way of a facial plastic surgeon for not only the tiniest of people, but those of the adult variety. In just three short years he has built a stunning practice under the name of East Coast Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, with offices in both New York City and Hackensack, NJ where he not only sculpts the facial features of the rich and famous, but takes three month old babies to the operating room to fix cleft palates.

"It's a little scary. They are very small with tiny airways and no room for error," said Dr. Morin.

When the good doctor decided what geographical area to practice in, he took into consideration his family's rather enormous social network and the amount of potential clients in the New York area. However he had to roll the dice to open up a practice at a time when the financial future of our country was uncertain and shaky at best.

“At the time there weren't any jobs in cities I wanted to live in so I decided to choose the city I wanted to live in and figure the rest out.”

With his talent and skill set in hand, he went to work realizing that the best way to get busy as a physician is by word of mouth.

“If you provide a service that people want and respect and you do it well, there is always room for more.” However he concludes that referrals can be a slow process but strikingly solid in their results.

As far as competition and there is loads of it, Dr. Morin will only say that it is imperative that any doctor a patient considers for a procedure should be certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery. Their strict regulations make their surgeons a better pick for a more desired result and if one is looking to save a buck he ask that you remember the old adage, “The cheap becomes the expensive.”

Due to the high cost of medical malpractice insurance and the health insurance's strong hold on fees and services paid to doctors, countless amounts of specialists in high risk medicinal specialties are jumping into the field of plastic surgery. Its growing popularity and their ability to charge the patients directly as it is an elective surgery and not deal with the restraining insurance system is extremely attractive and makes better business sense.

“There is a reason that the insurance companies are posting enormous profits, the only way they can do that is by denying services,” Dr. Morin said.

These days the power of a celebrity endorsement is gold in the profession but they are few and far between. For obvious reasons they don't want anyone to know the work they have had done and if the surgeon has done a great job no one will know; but isn't that the point?

“I could say I have a celebrity clientele but it would be a violation of 100 federal laws if I were to disclose their names.”

So without question Dr. Morin respects his clients' anonymity and mainly uses word of mouth to herald his stellar reputation in attracting patients.

The multiple articles written about him increase awareness but the power of a YouTube documentary of Dr. Morin performing rhinoplasty has driven a substantial amount of clients to his practice. As has the numerous pictures he has up on his website that show the before and after results, especially of the children he has operated on, all over the world during his charity work, tours.

After traveling on six different medical missions into third world countries such as Guatemala, Columbia, Philippines, Haiti and Mauritius to perform reconstructive facial surgery on less fortunate children, Dr. Morin co-founded a charity named Developing Faces (www.developingfaces.org). He brings the medical aspect of it to the table.

“We have relationships with other surgeons in these countries along with political relationships which provide the hospital and operating room with large equipment and we supply the personnel and small equipment.” states Dr. Morin.

His partner Sue Kim a former pharmaceutical rep brings the business development, networking and financing aspect to the organization.

“When we were raising money for other organizations we really didn't know where that money was going but now he does what he loves, helping children and he knows where the money is going.” Ms. Kim said.

Dr. Morin also gets to choose the surgeons and can keep an eye on their work.

“The quality of care that we will be providing will be equal to the quality of care in the United States and I can’t say that about other organizations.” Dr. Morin said.

Also, one thing he is vehement about is that his doctors will not be performing any experimental operations on these children.

“If you’re not doing an operation in your own primary practice you should not be doing it in these other countries,” he stresses, “That will absolutely not happen in our organization.”

With a full surgical schedule, Dr. Morin’s future goal is to increase his Pediatric and Rhinoplasty patients as those are the two aspects of his practice that he enjoys the most. However as a board certified plastic surgeon who is interested in having the best and most natural outcome for the patient his algorithm begins with Botox and Restylane and ends with a face lift.

His passion for giving the patient the best surgical quality he can provide regardless of his cost is paramount to him. He realizes that to grow his practice he can either have other doctors work in his practice – which he does not think will work as patients come to him – raise his prices – which he is not a fan of – or book up far in advance which is his ideal business model.

“Since what I do is mostly elective surgery most people can wait for the services I provide.”

With his future personal sights set on marriage, speckled with three or four kids, his professional goals include having his charity “really take off” and steadily continue to grow his practice. He has no aspirations for Hollywood; this doctor is an “East Coast” guy and is looking forward to enjoying his life and practice on the right coast.