

## WHAT DO WE WANT

The Ethical Standards and Conduct Review Committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC has advised the profession (through the College Quarterly, Winter 2002) that "the donation of a surgical or medical procedure as a door prize...is inappropriate".

Rumour has it, though, that while no procedure was done on the male contestant, the woman was sent to Manitoba to have hers done, in order to circumvent the College's restrictions.

In addition, other contests like this one continue to pop up in Vancouver, for instance, "It's a Whole New You! His & Hers Makeover Contest", which awarded two prizes of \$10,000 worth of services including cosmetic dentistry and botox.

This trend is not likely to go away anytime soon. We want the College to set clear policy *and* procedure to put a stop to all events of this nature.

## WHAT ELSE?

We want magazines, tv and movies to portray real, everyday women.

We want employers to consider us for our skills, not how we dress.

We want individual men to stop reducing us to our looks and begin to value us as equal human beings, but also to expand their idea of what beauty is.

*Vancouver Women's  
Health Collective*



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As we stand here, the two winners of the Vancouver Extraordinary Makeover Event, a contest for a prize package, which includes plastic surgery, are being "unveiled" before family, friends and the media.

## VANCOUVER EXTRAORDINARY MAKEOVER EVENT: HAZARDOUS TO WOMENS' HEALTH AND EQUALITY

This event, in the tradition of American reality TV shows like The Swan and Extreme Makeover, is an opportunity for sponsors Dr. Mark Godley of False Creek Surgical Centre and others to "showcase their products", at the expense of the contestants.

## THE SETUP

From the time women are born, we are objectified. We receive casual comment on our looks by everyone around us. Meanwhile, the media bombards us with images of an unattainable (for most) beauty ideal – thin, white, blue-eyed and blond.

This is not “just about self-esteem”. It’s part of how men control women. Men control most of the resources in our world, so they determine the criteria for who gets what. For women, pleasing the boss or husband or john most often means looking good.

The penalty for not conforming ranges from the threat of lifelong loneliness to poverty. These threats aim to keep us obsessed with appearance, as our survival depends on it. They aim to distract us from participating fully in society, and degrade our humanity.

## TURNING PROFIT ON THE SETUP

Clearly, the main purpose of shows and events like the Extraordinary Makeover is *advertising*. To call it false advertising would be a huge understatement.

These contests glorify the benefits of cosmetic surgery and seriously downplay the risks and lengthy recovery times.

As a result, more and more are going under the knife. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, cosmetic procedures have increased by almost 300% since 1997 ([www.cosmeticplasticsurgerystatistics.com](http://www.cosmeticplasticsurgerystatistics.com)). In 2003, 87% of all cosmetic procedures were done on women ([www.cosmeticplasticsurgerystatistics.com](http://www.cosmeticplasticsurgerystatistics.com)). No statistics on cosmetic surgery are collected in Canada.

## THE LIE THAT WOMEN WANT IT

There are many women who won't spend the time/money it takes to measure up. There are also many women who can't. Many women right now are having to choose between paying for medicine and paying for food, or between paying for food and paying rent, let alone how they look. The idea of informed consent in this context is totally meaningless.

How is it possible to make a free choice about whether or not to have plastic surgery when society is structured in such a way that a cosmetic procedure might fulfill basic needs that aren't being fulfilled already because you have second-class status?

Even the woman who might not otherwise have been compelled to have plastic surgery is more likely to seek it out if its free, as a contest prize.

**No one would want plastic surgery in a perfect world. Society as a whole is what needs to change, not the body parts of individual women.**