

## Working as a plastics and reconstructive surgeon

New Zealand plastics and reconstructive surgeons talk about the reality of working within this field

### **Why did you choose plastics and reconstructive surgery and what do you like most?**

Plastic surgery is an intricate surgical science that involves careful attention to detail. The surgery is often very creative and innovative so this is an exciting field in which to work.

### **What strengths and abilities make a good plastics and reconstructive surgeon?**

You need to be committed to striving for the best possible results, which may mean re-operating two or three times on one patient. Excellent technical abilities are important. You need to be creative and be able to appreciate physical appearance and how to improve it.

### **As a specialist, can you describe a typical day?**

Most days commence at 7.30am and finish somewhere between 7.00pm and 8.00pm. The work involves a combination of consultations and time spent in the operating room.

### **What do you think are the future challenges of plastics and reconstructive surgery?**

Other surgical specialties are beginning to take over some of the techniques and operations of plastic and reconstructive surgery, so the specialty will need to improve standards even further and continue to develop new and innovative methods for dealing with problems.

### **What are future opportunities in plastics and reconstructive surgery?**

One specialist said that if plastic surgeons continue to have good imaginations and innovative approaches, there is no limit to the scope of opportunities in this field.

### **What is the work/life balance like?**

The ability to take time out is very limited once you commence in full time practice and the impact on family life is like other surgical subspecialty.

### **What are the disadvantages of plastics and reconstructive surgery?**

The specialty has become a bit of a 'dumping ground' for minor problems (such as skin cancers, leg ulcers and pressure sores) that other specialties do not wish to deal with. At this stage there is little demonstrated commitment from some of the smaller but significant hospitals in New Zealand to establish posts for consultants. Centres like Whangarei, Tauranga, New Plymouth, Gisborne, Napier, Hastings, Nelson, Invercargill and Dunedin should all have consultant posts established in this field.

### **Any comments on the current training?**

Training at Middlemore Hospital is said to be extensive and candidates tend to perform very well.