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Beauty is in the hands of a specialist

DANVERS AT WORK

By Myrna Fearer

EMPLOYEE FOLDER

Name: Anna Petropoulos
Weissleder, MD

Occupation: Facial plastic surgeon/otolaryngologist, medical director

Address: New England Facial and Cosmetic Surgery Center, 80 Lindall St.

Years of experience: 13

Age: The better side of 40

Goal: To impart peace and happiness to people while rejuvenating their appearance.

By Myrna Fearer
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"Does she or doesn't she," used to be followed with, "Only her hairdresser knows." Today, only her plastic surgeon knows.

When movie stars walk down the red carpet or appear at the microphone on Oscar night, all eyes are not only on the designs and the jewelry, but the whole package. Everyone wants to look chic as well as young, and many are willing to pay for it. But, plastic surgery is not just for the rich and famous, according to some who practice the art.

Danvers physician Anna Petropoulos Weissleder, who goes by Dr. Petropoulos, heads up the New England Facial and Cosmetic Surgery Center at the Hunt Medical Building, where Petropoulos sees people from the wealthy to those who save up for the surgery, all wanting to look better. Her practice, she says, is about 90 percent facial plastic surgery with 30 percent of that devoted to nose refinements. Oft requested, too, is the endoscopic browlift, which requires only half-inch incisions thanks to the use of a tiny telescope and special camera. It's a perfect way to get rid of sagging brows, to eliminate a tired look, or forehead frown lines, to get rid of a stern appearance, she says.

"Beauty is very important on the inside as well as the outside," Petropoulos says. "If people have beauty on the inside, it will naturally reflect on the outside. I look at the person as a whole to try to make them look as good as they feel."

Whether it's because of the program "Extreme Makeover" or segments on TV shows such as Oprah, the Today Show, Good Morning America or Chronicle, plastic surgery and non-invasive alternatives to facial rejuvenation are hot topics today. And men, as well as women, are going for procedures designed to make them look younger, healthier and more vibrant.

"There are professional men who need to maintain their edge to compete in the workplace," Petropoulos says.

Petropoulos, who is board certified in two specialties — Facial Plastic Surgery and Otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat) — performs all sorts of facial and neck surgical procedures, from rhinoplasty (nose refinement) to face lifts, at Beverly, Addison Gilbert, Salem and Union hospitals, as well as the Hunt Center, across from the office she's occupied for two years.

But, for those who prefer alternatives to surgery, effective procedures that don't have to be done in a hospital setting and almost or completely eliminate downtime, Petropoulos offers those as well.

One of the most familiar is probably BOTOX. Because of her expertise, Petropoulos is one of the few physicians in the Boston area to have been chosen as a national trainer.

One of the newest, and for Petropoulos, most exciting procedures to come along is Thermage. Seen on Oprah and the morning shows, it's the latest technique to hit the female and male talk circuits. It's become the newest alternative for a face lift.

"Thermage is a radio frequency skin tightening procedure," Petropoulos explains. "It tightens the skin over the bony structure of the face and gets rid of the jowls."

It also runs in the \$2,500 to \$3,000 range, although cost depends on a person's skin, the doctor says.

The radiofrequency is transmitted via a device that holds a microchip. One chip is allocated for each patient and is timed for that treatment. It can never be used again. A special cream is put on the patient's face and a grid template transferred to the skin. The microchip fits into each little square of the grid, sending its radiofrequency waves into the skin to



PHOTO BY MYRNA FEARER

Dr. Anna Petropoulos, facial plastic surgeon and otolaryngologist, shows the before and after results of a patient after one Thermage treatment, the latest non-invasive alternative to a surgical facelift.

work their magic.

In Thermage, the top layers of the skin are protected with a cooling spray. Radiofrequency energy heats the collagen in the lower layers, which triggers off a reaction from the deep skin structures causing them to tighten immediately. In time, new collagen grows which tightens the skin even more. The result is a more youthful appearance.

Treatments have been known to last as long as two years and maybe even longer, depending on the way a person's skin ages. Whether one or two treatments, six months apart, would be necessary for optimum results is also dependent on the amount of aging present.

"(Thermage) is wonderful," Petropoulos says. "The patients love it. It makes them look great and there's no downtime."

When speaking with Petropoulos, one notices immediately her attention to detail. She'll tell you, in part, she knows she's meticulous but attributes it to her astronomical sign, Virgo. No surgery or procedure is ever hurried. Her philosophy would be: Perfection can't be rushed.

"I'm a very conservative and safe surgeon," says Petropoulos, who, not surprising, discourages performing multiple procedures together. "I limit the amount of things that can be done at once. Being meticulous takes time."

Petropoulos has been well trained for the profession she comes by naturally. She is the daughter of a dental surgeon mother, who was also a college professor, and a father with M.D. and Ph.D. degrees. Petropoulos lived in Berkeley, Calif., her first eight years, where her dad was a professor at the medical

school. The family then moved to what was formerly called Rhodesia in Africa when her father worked for the World Health Organization as dean of the medical school.

Petropoulos received her medical education at Goethe University Medical School in Frankfurt, Germany, and then went on to Harvard's Massachusetts General Hospital and Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary for her residency and fellowships in facial plastic surgery. She also trained in otolaryngology, head and neck surgery, and is board certified in both fields.

Petropoulos worked in Canada for several years after her training at Harvard, gaining experience in Restylane, an injectable wrinkle filler. It's just one of several injectables, like BOTOX, that Petropoulos offers.

The plastic surgeon is married to Ralph Weissleder, a medical doctor with a Ph.D. in molecular biology who is an interventional radiologist at Mass. General. The couple are the parents of an 18-month old son, Oliver.

Cosmetic surgery has come a long way, but Petropoulos also offers several other age-defying alternatives to surgery that can be done in her office, including ionzyme galvanic and ultrasound facial vitamin treatments; physician strength microdermabrasion; and La Roche Posay, French dermaplaning peels; plus home skin care programs.

"It's so exciting to live in this day and age of technology where so many non-invasive options are available to us to maintain our youthful appearance without undergoing of surgery," Petropoulos says.