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The Benefits of Beauty

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What's Up with the Cover?

M. Castillo, *Editor-in-Chief*

Covers of both commercial and scientific magazines have changed dramatically with time.¹ Commercial magazines in the United States started publishing in the 1700s, and the first medical journal, the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, debuted in 1811. Early periodicals had no covers, and in most, the first page contained the title of the lead article or the table of contents (such as the *NEJM*). In the first half of the 19th century, the covers of magazines were modeled after those of books, providing only minimal information: the name of the periodical, which was generally “framed” to emphasize it, and the date of publication. At times, covers contained a small illustration that generally played only a decorative purpose. In other cases, this illustration was symbolic or allegoric, tending to portray the spirit of the magazine. In the late 1800s “cover lines” started. These were full or abbreviated titles of some of the topics found inside. Commonly, 1 or 2 cover lines were listed under the magazine’s title. While the *NEJM* is probably responsible for the table of contents being found on covers of medical journals in the United States, *Reader’s Digest* can claim similar status for lay publications. At the end of the 19th century, magazines started to display the different sections they contained on their covers.

As the 20th century began, there was a large and outstanding cadre of illustrators, and the “poster” cover was created. The intention was to make covers so beautiful that one could even conceive of framing and hanging them on a wall. These illustrations were so important that, again, periodicals decided to retain only their titles and date of publication on their covers and all other information regarding content was dropped. Poster illustrations many times had no relationship at all with contents. As contents shifted toward the pictorial, posters filled the covers of oversized magazines. Next step, in the 1920s and 1930s, photographs started overtaking illustrations on poster covers, and magazine titles lost their frames, while all other information was displaced to the bottom of the covers (this was typically seen on *Life* magazine, and the intention was to make the picture the unobstructed focus of the cover).

Covers such as the one on our new *American Journal of Neuroradiology (AJNR)* are called “integrated or synthetic covers,” meaning that you find the title of the magazine and publication date, illustrations, and some information regarding its contents.² Information on contents may be primary (large and bold) or secondary (smaller font) and is often printed in contrasting colors. Some cover lines identify authors; others do not. In the late 1960s, cover lines became bold and artistic elements in their own right. This quickly overwhelmed covers that contained a forest of information, partially obscuring the underlying photographs (as seen

predominantly on fashion and music magazines). In a sense, cover lines became advertisements for contents and soon overwhelmed all other cover elements, leading some medical journals to drop all illustrations (as with our previous cover). It seems that the most “sophisticated” publications had the most information on their covers, which also gave them an intimidating air. However, as photography (and in the case of *AJNR*, quality and variety of digital illustrations) improved, space was again made for images on covers.

The editorial office of *AJNR* hopes that you will enjoy our new cover and interior re-design. We believe that our new cover incorporates modern design trends such as large posterlike illustrations with nonobtrusive cover lines; highlights of the contents; publication date information; and a logo that is prominent, frameless, and modern, all displayed in bold colors that pertain to our history. Because our new cover is posterlike, we now offer the possibility of ordering these in a large format so that they can be easily framed and displayed in your offices, reading rooms, and departments. They say that you should not judge a book by its cover, but in the case of *AJNR*, we believe you can.

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PERSPECTIVES

The Benefits of Beauty

M. Castillo, *Editor-in-Chief*

Beauty is only skin deep, but the ugly goes clean to the bone.

Dorothy Parker

Although many say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, I do not agree. To me, beauty is clearly defined, objective, and even measurable. Someone considered beautiful will be seen that way by most observers, even those from different cultural and ethnic groups. The opposite is also true: An ugly person is considered as such by nearly everyone. When one looks at a female face, the following features are associated with beauty: narrower face and nose, less fat, full lips, minimal hypertelorism, longer eyelashes, and high cheek bones; for men, the same plus darker eyebrows, broader upper half of the face, prominent mandible and chin, and no wrinkles between the nose and corners of the

*Factoid: Before the 1920s, tan skin was considered “lower class” and borne mainly by agricultural workers. Soon after Coco Chanel started vacationing in the French Riviera, tanning became associated with the leisurely lifestyle of the rich and famous and seen as beautiful.

mouth.¹ Of course, to these mixtures you can add tan skin, which is considered more attractive nowadays than paleness.* Facial symmetry is also a hallmark of beauty but possesses a tricky conundrum. Symmetric faces are generally more beautiful, but perfect symmetry may not be beautiful. If one creates chimeric faces by duplicating either the right or left sides, some faces become beautiful while others turn ugly. Curiously, individuals with symmetric faces have overall better health than those with asymmetric faces.² Could it be that better genes are reflected by beauty and health? It seems so, because mate quality is generally based on those features—that is, to select a healthy/beautiful partner you, too, must have these characteristics that, in turn, will lead to your children having 2 sets of healthy and gorgeous genes. Not only do individuals choose mates who resemble themselves, after 25 years of marriage they become even more alike (advice: try to find a beautiful companion).³ There is now a “dating” Web site that allows you to find someone who shares your facial features, a fact touted to increase compatibility.⁴

Mother Nature and Father Time are beauty’s greatest enemies; the age at which most men find women’s faces most attractive is 24.8 years.⁵ Beauty ratings in relation to age affect women more than men, and beauty ratings for both genders drop with advancing age. Curiously, ugly persons are less affected by age, meaning that once ugly, they remain ugly for life, and that seems to overcome the effects of aging. Urban British men now spend more time and effort in their daily grooming than women (83 versus 79 minutes).⁶ In the United States, where men are still men, the overall time and ratio are different (32 versus 44 minutes). With age, both genders spend more time in this activity, and the face gets the most attention. After all, as the popular and famous neurologist Oliver Sacks put it, “It is the face, first and last, that is judged ‘beautiful’ in an esthetic sense.”⁷

The reality is that human beauty is scarce, and like anything else scarce, it becomes a commodity. Thus, the success of plastic surgery should not surprise anyone. Eyelid surgery is the third most commonly performed cosmetic surgery (after breast augmentation and liposuction), and the top 5 noninvasive procedures are done for the face (botulinum and hyaluronic acid injections, laser hair removal, skin resurfacing, and chemical peels).⁸ I find it surprising that the highest rate of cosmetic surgery occurs in Korea, followed by Brazil, Taiwan, and the United States.⁹ Plastic surgery done to alleviate the anxiety of aging simply does not make one look younger; you look...well, just like you had surgery. Cosmetic surgery done to improve an asymmetry such as a crooked nose does, however, make one better-looking. Spending more on clothing, haircuts, and makeup does little to increase beauty. For every US dollar spent on these items, one can expect a return of only 4 cents.¹⁰ From a purely financial point of view, spending on education is a better deal as each extra year of schooling translates into a 10% increase in wages. Remember that on average, women value education in men more than looks. The reverse is not true. Would this change if the earning capacity of women was on par with that of men?

In his entertaining book, *Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People are More Successful*,¹¹ Daniel Hamermesh addresses the economics of beauty. From it, the reader can clearly see that physical beauty = money. This is true not only in professions such as

high-fashion modeling and sex work where gains are directly related to beauty, but applies to nearly all jobs. Regardless of physical beauty, it seems that immigrants in any country earn less than others as their looks are generally considered different from those of natives. The difference in wages between beautiful and ugly individuals is not much, about 4%–5% but becomes significant over a lifetime. Social networking, such as Facebook has made beauty even more important. Appreciation of beauty does not vary with intelligence, but too much beauty is sometimes penalized (the so-called “bimbo factor”). The concept of beauty extends to the body, and short and obese individuals have smaller salaries than their taller and slimmer counterparts.

Neuroesthetics, a subspecialty that first appeared in 2002, attempts to study the neural bases for the contemplation and creation of beauty. Emotion plays an important role in the appreciation of beauty, and what else makes us more emotional than a beautiful person? Makeup is nothing more than a means of exaggerating features already present and results in higher brain activity in certain locations. One of the 8 laws of artistic experience of Ramachandran and Hirstein is symmetry.¹² To perceive a human being as artistically pleasurable, symmetry must be present. Evolutionary biologists state that asymmetry is associated with infection and disease.¹² Symmetry results in activations in the parietal and premotor regions subserving spatial processing.¹³ fMRI signals are seen in the frontomedial cortex and intraparietal sulcus when one is exposed to beauty. The perception of symmetry and beauty relies on brain areas that support high-level visual analysis. Moreover, areas associated with judgments are also activated, and appreciation of beauty cannot occur without these. In 1 experiment, the same brain region (the medial orbitofrontal cortex) was activated by both musical and visual beauty.¹⁴ As the famous Irish statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke said, “Beauty is, for the greater part, some quality in bodies acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses” (*On the Sublime and Beautiful*).

It is obvious that nature and economics favor beautiful individuals, so what about the rest of us? California, the District of Columbia, and 5 cities prohibit discriminatory hiring based on looks (pictures are never requested when applying for jobs in those regions but can be voluntarily submitted). Laws in Michigan and San Francisco explicitly forbid taking into account height and weight when hiring. A recent article in *The New York Times* goes as far as proposing that ugliness should be protected by extending the Americans with Disabilities Act.¹⁵ Because beauty is inherited, it could be argued that ugliness is already protected by the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act passed in 2008, which outlaws discrimination in employment and health insurance based on genetic data.¹⁶ The overall impact on the economy would be small as only 1%–2% of the population is truly ugly, but who would be willing to be officially labeled as “ugly”? If that denomination compensates for the US \$230,000 per individual lost in a lifetime, I believe that many would.

In academics, we prize intellect over beauty, but the reality is otherwise. Beautiful professors attract more students at colleges, while ugly ones face empty or nearly empty classrooms, a worldwide valid observation. The Web site <http://www.ratemyprofessors.com> allows users to input opinions not only on aca-

democratic endeavors but also about how their teachers look. “Hot” professors make, on average, 6% higher wages than their not-so-hot counterparts. This observation applies to many other professions, including football players and CEOs of the largest Fortune 500 companies. Charitable organizations know this well; their most beautiful solicitors generally bring in more donations. Handsome public attorneys are more likely to move into the private sector later in life than ugly ones. Attractive political candidates get twice as many votes as their opposites. In economics, this is known as “customer discrimination”—that is, a good-looking person becomes a part of what the customer is buying. The store chain Abercrombie & Fitch is well-known to hire, promote, and use in publicity only individuals they rate as “hot,” a behavior that brought a large lawsuit based on its discriminatory policies.¹⁷ Of course, that has not changed the behavior of many similar businesses—just walk into one of these stores and you will find yourself surrounded by beautiful, mostly female, employees in their late teens or early 20s.

Customers may, more concretely, buy beauty. An Internet search that I did for purposes of this Perspectives revealed several advertisements by “beautiful and clever” women selling their eggs to infertile couples. In Great Britain, where a standard egg donation goes for about £250, beautiful women’s eggs may fetch up to £12,000.¹⁸ The Web site <http://www.beautifulpeople.com> went as far as offering sales of sperm from handsome men, and in 2010, its CEO expelled 5000 members for being ugly.¹⁹ Because mixing 2 sets of genes generates an enormous amount of randomness and variability, good looks cannot be completely guaranteed if one buys these eggs and sperm. Evolution selects the best-looking individuals, and why not? On average, they have better lifestyles, earn more, and are healthier, physically and mentally. There are still great jobs where physical beauty is not critical, but they are becoming scarce. Being the editor of a scientific journal is one of them, but I wonder, if I were better-looking would *AJNR* have more subscribers?

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EDITORIAL

Flow Diverters for Unruptured Internal Carotid Artery Aneurysms: Dangerous and Not Yet an Alternative for Conventional Endovascular Techniques

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With interest,² we read the article of Lanzino et al¹ about the use of flow diverters for proximal internal carotid artery aneurysms in 21 patients. There was a higher rate of complete occlusion at follow-up with flow diverters than in a matched series of aneurysms treated with conventional techniques (coiling, stent placement, ICA occlusion). Most important, there were no complications leading to permanent neurologic deficits or death, though 1 patient was found to have a complete ICA occlusion at 6 months without symptoms. The message in the article is that although longer follow-up is needed, flow diverters are probably better than conventional techniques for these ICA aneurysms because of a higher complete occlusion rate at follow-up.

The results in this study are exceptionally good (if we disregard the asymptomatic ICA occlusion at follow-up) and better than most previously reported series. Briganti et al² recently reported the initial experience with flow diverters in Italy and found, in a cohort of 273 patients with unruptured aneurysms, a morbidity of 3.7% and a mortality of 5.9% at 1-month follow-up. There were 7