

# Could craniofacial plastic surgery give you a confidence boost?

*Mr Ivo Gwanmesia is a craniofacial plastic surgeon who set up his practice in 2015 in London after training in facial and skull reconstruction*



IMAGE: GETTY

After graduating from Manchester University Medical School, Mr Gwanmesia developed a passion for facial and skull reconstruction. He worked in a number of London's teaching hospitals, including Great Ormond Street, and completed a Fellowship in the US. Throughout his training Ivo developed unique skills that were seamlessly transferable to a career in cosmetic surgery.

## Q/ WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WORK IN COSMETIC SURGERY?

I met the surgeon who performed the first face transplant in the US at a meeting in Zambia. This was the moment that defined my career. He was so inspirational that when he invited me to work with him I accepted immediately. I learned so much from the experience and set up my own

practice in the UK shortly after.

Taking the leap from craniofacial reconstruction to cosmetic surgery felt completely natural. I was always fascinated by deformities of the face and skull, and to be able to solve these problems for medical or aesthetic reasons is equally rewarding. The skills I acquired throughout my training were unique and highly sought-after amongst cosmetic surgeons. For example I know how to access the base of the skull and how to move things around expertly, which is a skill many cosmetic surgeons do not have. Patients tell me they feel they're in safe hands because of my training.

## Q/ WHO TAKES THE LEAD, YOU OR THE PATIENT?

It's all about teamwork. I work closely with

every patient, making joint decisions. I take a journey with them, from the initial consultation to post-surgery follow up. My patients humble me. They sometimes take me by surprise with their knowledge, and I even learn from them. I work with humility and I am always learning. Arrogance has no place in an operating theatre.

One patient came to me with a chronic nasal problem. Throughout her own research she discovered that Afro-Caribbean noses have a thicker layer of internal fat than white European noses. She showed me a picture of the layer on her iPhone and it was a lightbulb moment. I researched it further and I am now an expert in the physiological differences between black and white noses. All thanks to a patient!

It's impressive and humbling how savvy

patients are, thanks to social media and the internet.

## Q/ DOES TECHNOLOGY PLAY A PART IN YOUR WORK?

There's a huge amount of integration between technology and surgery — I'm trying to keep up! Social media is such a powerful tool for both doctors and patients and I have created a series of Youtube videos to answer common questions. I use cutting edge software to simulate how a patient will look after surgery as well as to analyse a patient's facial, nasal and jaw profile. This extremely advanced technology gives the patient a picture of the result they can expect and allows them to be really involved in the process — much more than ever before.

