

DR. SOMASUNDARAM SATHAPPAN

A plastic and reconstructive surgeon who maintains research and academic roots while concentrating on private practice.

Dr. Somasundaram Sathappan is a plastic and reconstructive surgeon and heads the Soma Plastic Surgery (formerly known as Clinical Aesthetics) clinic in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Drawing on nearly two decades of strong surgical experience, Dr. Soma offers a variety of cosmetic procedures at his clinic.

"I like plastic surgery as it is an amalgamation of art and surgery," Dr. Soma says. "Seeing a person transformed makes it all worthwhile."

In addition to the liposuction, facelifts and breast augmentations and reductions he does in his clinic, Dr. Soma's extensive surgical background includes microsurgery, hand surgery and general plastic surgery for patients suffering limb trauma or orofacial cancer.

Craniofacial surgery is a particular speciality, and one in which Dr. Soma takes great pride.

"I personally get immense satisfaction from cleft lip surgeries," he said. "Nothing like seeing a mother's face when her child smiles after a cleft lip surgery."

Dr. Soma received his medical degree from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur in 1989 and was posted to Sarawak in Malaysia Borneo for a year and a half before returning to Kuala Lumpur and joining the National University of Malaysia as a trainee lecturer in the Department of Surgery.

Dr. Soma completed his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh in Scotland in 1994 and returned to the National University of Malaysia for a Masters degree in surgery in 1996, followed by additional plastic surgery training at the Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery in Swansea, Wales, which he completed in 2001.

A special interest in treating burns, scars and keloids led Dr. Soma to help establish the Advanced Burns Centre at the National University of Malaysia. He is also a member of the Asian Scar Advisory Board, with the aim of advancing the science of scar and keloid treatment.

"The [board] also tries to formulate guidelines for other doctors to follow and these should be published soon," Dr. Soma said.

Building on his early experience as a lecturer, Dr. Soma guides third and final year medical students at the National University of Malaysia and post-graduates in the Masters in Surgery program in clinical bedside courses. Dr. Soma also teaches courses for student nurses at the University of Malaysia's teaching hospital and lends his expertise internationally as a tutor in the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh's Basic Surgical Skills course.

Dr. Soma has lectured at many local and international meetings, typically on scars and scar treatment and

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stem cell facial rejuvenation using platelet rich plasma.

Dr. Soma keeps a foot in the research community with two ongoing projects. One is a prospective trial to determine the efficacy of various treatments for chronic lymphoedema of the limbs while the other is a prospective study comparing the efficacy of bovine skin and paraffin gauze for skin donor site dressing.

Much of his medical experience has been while in government service – nearly 15 years, Dr. Soma noted. He now says he wishes to concentrate his expertise on the patients in his private practice.

“[Plastic surgery] can change a person’s attitude and outlook towards life in general. Doors that were shut can now open!”



Plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr. Somasundaram Sathappan's academic interests mean that, alongside his private practice, he is involved in clinical research.