

A SPECIAL KIND OF CLINIC

The Pyramid Clinic at the lake in Zurich is a leader in specialised surgical treatments. With about 90 staff and numerous accredited doctors, patients here benefit from first class medical expertise, individual attention and a sophisticated personal atmosphere.



From pioneer to leading private clinic

As one of the first private clinics of this kind to be opened, the Pyramid Clinic emerged in 1993 out of the former day clinic of Dr. Cédric A. George in Zurich. It introduced a completely new kind of hospital care: a clinic on a private basis funded by doctors. In only eleven years, this pioneering enterprise has turned into a modern and highly respected private service provider – whether due to the magical powers attributed to pyramids, the warm and sophisticated atmosphere, the beautiful lakeside location, or above all the team spirit and commitment of the entire staff.



Small is beautiful

The Pyramid Clinic today is a modern, independently managed private clinic largely operated on the resident doctor system, with about 90 staff and numerous independently practising specialists. As before, the clinic is operated exclusively by the doctors and the management board. With a total capacity of six operating theatres, 40 patient beds and a day clinic, 3000 operations are carried out on average each year. Small but beautiful is the principle.



Specialised surgery of the highest quality

The secret of the Pyramid Clinic's success lies in the clear focusing on selected surgical specialities (information box). Thanks to this specialisation, which enables teamwork with the most renowned surgeons in each area, unique expertise has been built up to the benefit of all patients. The Pyramid Clinic concept also offers further advantages found only in a private clinic of the highest order, including free choice

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Treatments offered by the Pyramid Clinic in Zurich

- Plastic, reconstructive and aesthetic surgery
- Breast cancer surgery
- Maxillo-facial surgery
- Treatment of articular and sports injuries
- Vein surgery
- Hand surgery
- Foot surgery
- Minimally invasive abdominal and hernia surgery
- Anaesthesiology and pain therapy
- Eye surgery
- Ear, nose and throat surgery (ENT)
- Orthopaedics
- Gynaecology

of doctor, who is optimally available and reachable for the patient, round-the-clock presence of a resident doctor, as well as complementary medical and nonmedical treatments such as massage, hair-styling and cosmetics.

Medical quality combined with first-class hotel comfort

At the Pyramid Clinic, professionalism goes hand in hand with human warmth and friendliness. Instead of the typical hospital atmosphere, patients find sophisticated comfort and heartiness, more like in a four-star hotel than in a clinic. This atmosphere is generated and upheld by the personal management style and the exceptional commitment of the staff. The outstanding results year by year of internal surveys among patients and staff, as well as external hospital ratings and independent quality management tests, are attributable to the professional quality management practised at the Pyramid Clinic, which in 2001 won the Swiss Esprix Award for business excellence.

Setting new trends

The Pyramid Clinic is a founding member of Swiss Leading Hospitals – a unique body of private clinics whose

success formula is "Top medical care plus first-class hotel services". Furthermore, the Pyramid Clinic is represented in all relevant regional and national organisations, lobbying actively for innovative hospital services of the highest quality and upholding the interests of private clinics as key partners in the Swiss health care system.

Joint venture with a renowned Zurich clinic in the best tradition

About four years ago, the Pyramid Clinic joined forces with the St. Raphael Clinic in Kusnacht near Zurich, thus enabling their development on a common basis in future. To this purpose, the Pyramid Clinic acquired the majority of the St. Raphael Clinic shares at the end of 2000. These two clinics complement each other optimally with their range of treatments so that both of them benefit from valuable know-how transfer and mutual support for operational matters (such as staff capacity or material resources).

Strategic partnership

Desiring to offer its international clientele first-class aesthetic medicine treatments in St. Moritz, the Gut Clinic recently approached Dr. Cédric A.



George, founder of the Pyramid Clinic and head of its Plastic Surgery Centre. At the beginning of 2004, he decided to offer the full range of aesthetic medicine treatments within the Gut Clinic. The initiative springs from a long-standing partnership between the Pyramid and Gut Clinics. Having specialised for decades in trauma surgery and orthopaedics, the Gut Clinic in St. Moritz can now widen its offering, thus establishing itself in the alpine area as a uniquely reputed leader in aesthetic surgery. Not only do both clinics belong to the Association of Swiss Leading Hospitals, but their high international standing and uncompromising quality philosophy guarantee guests the best possible medical care and treatment.

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degree, with classic problems of that nature today. These days it is possible to use plastic surgery methods not only to treat deformities, accident scars or the after-effects of cancer, but also to arrest or minimise undesirable, age-related changes. Thanks to progress in modern medicine, there are practically no limitations on the options now available to approach your personal ideal of beauty. That is why it is all the more important not to strive for flawlessness, but to preserve the natural proportions and individual character. Retaining natural beauty must be the primary objective. We are not sculptors carving out perfect human beings or creating beauty per se, but we can help unlock and accentuate existing, individual beauty. Serious plastic surgery, as we understand it, means combining beauty and natural appearance – ever mindful of achieving an optimal balance between what is medically advisable and aesthetically desirable.

What do you see as the future trends and also the opportunities and risks ahead?

The increase in surgical interventions will lead to continual improvement in the quality of services. I am convinced that many of the newer methods such as certain laser treatments will soon disappear again and be replaced, in the medium to long term, by classic dermatological and surgical methods. The trend is definitely in the direction of minimal intervention and non-invasive operating techniques that produce the most natural result possible and leave next to no scarring. One example of this is face-lifting. Whereas in the past, the main emphasis was on tightening the skin, the focus is now on repositioning submerged, deeper layers of tissue with the help of endoscopic technology. We will also have to confront the issues of gene technology and biotechnology in plastic surgery. The

possibilities presented by gene surgery – particularly prenatal correction, and also the promising science of growth factors used to accelerate the process of regeneration and scar formation, to improve skin quality and to replace foreign implants represent major opportunities for us in the coming decades, but also some real challenges.

How much importance do you attach to the whole anti-aging philosophy?

Treatment approaches designed to slow down the aging process do have their merits. However, the effects of such treatments should not be overestimated, nor the risks underestimated. Particularly in the field of hormone therapies, there are some very unprofessional treatments on offer. We now know that a sensible lifestyle designed to minimise harmful elements is important, but it can never cancel out inherent genetic factors. In fact, I would go as far as to say that the real journey is in the direction of quality of life rather than the pursuit of beauty.

Which aesthetic treatments are most commonly requested?

The most frequently performed operations are corrections of age-related changes to the face, such as upper lid and lower lid lifting, face/neck lifting and nose correction procedures. We also offer the entire spectrum of breast surgery, tissue tightening and liposuction. In the past, we have noticed the biggest growth in demand for the latter procedure. Removing unwanted padding from the bottom, the legs or the entire body certainly leads to correction of the figure, but should not be seen as a weight control or, worse still, a weight reduction measure. And, of course, the injection of Botox and other substances designed to smooth out wrinkles is also among the range of services offered at our centre.

Who are your clients?

Most of our clients are women and men between the ages of 35 and 65. A significant proportion of our work is also with foreign patients. Most of them are normal people who lead a happy and fulfilled life. They have toyed with the idea of having corrective treatment for a long time, because they recognise the discrepancy between the outward impression they convey and their inner sense of vigour. They want to improve their appearance without changing their distinctive personal features, and they hope the operation will lead to an improvement in their individual quality of life.

When would you recommend or advise against treatment?

The decision for or against a certain procedure should only be made after a thorough analysis of the individual problem. What do I want to change, why do I want to change it and how important is it to me? The greater the suffering experienced and the smaller the expense and risk of the operation, the more compelling the reason for going ahead with the treatment. It is also important that the people involved act with realistic expectations and on their own convictions. If someone presents with a photo of an idol they would like to resemble, or gives the impression that the procedure requested is designed to compensate for some other problem, extreme caution is advisable. It is also difficult when people are simply not content with something or are unable to express their needs clearly. These are signs that patients have a psychological rather than a physical problem and plastic surgery cannot offer them a solution.

charisma of an individual. Real beauty comes from within, but this does not rule out the option of outside assistance. On the contrary, feeling content with your physical appearance can have a profound effect on your sense of well-being.

Are beautiful people happier and more successful?

Such a sweeping statement is probably untrue, even though the connection between physical appearance and professional success has been scientifically researched and generally corroborated. Much can be explained by this notion of inner harmony: if you feel good you tend to have a more confident, convincing manner and communicate more effectively. A well-presented, winning appearance makes many things easier. Just how closely social acceptance is linked to external characteristics is evident in the way children with obvious physical defects (such as prominent ears, skin rashes, size discrepancies) have much greater difficulty being accepted by their peers. Unfortunately, we do have to accept that our health, and that includes our physical beauty, is something we are born with and we can only influence it – even with the help of modern medicine – to a certain degree.

How do you account for the current preoccupation with beauty and youthfulness?

I don't think it is merely a phenomenon of our time. The search for and admiration of beauty is as old as mankind. Whether you look at old Egypt, ancient Greece, the Middle Ages or our world today, beauty has always been an important factor. Extreme examples like the Rubens women or Twiggy models are a recurring phenomenon. But you can be sure they were not considered ideal beauties by the average person of their



Dr. Cédric A. George, 51, MD for Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery at Pyramid Clinic in Zürich

time. What makes the current perception of beauty different from that of past eras is, firstly, the wealth of medical possibilities and available resources. Medical and technological progress has been accompanied by an increase in financial means, which has prompted more and more people to take up a range of related treatments. Secondly, cultural and religious emancipation has had a profound effect on the body cult and our ability to recreate certain images of beauty. In the past, some of these things were simply not possible. Take for instance fashion, which has undergone such radical change in the past few years, in becoming more and more figure-hugging and permissive. This factor has definitely accentuated the demand for beautiful or even perfect proportions.

What part do the media play in this increasing demand for perfection?

The wealth of communication options available today undoubtedly

has a significant impact. The media not only promote and proliferate these personal desires but also make it easier to gain access to information and offers. On the other hand, the media frequently portrays a form of reality that is quite exaggerated and one-sided. Take, for instance, the way Hollywood stars are marketed – perpetuating the myth of perfect, but quite unattainable beauty – or extreme examples that are picked up by the media with plenty of hype and tend to discredit plastic surgery as a whole.

So how do you see the role of plastic surgery?

Plastic surgery is a very broad, sophisticated and specialist field that includes medical treatments of many different kinds. Often our role is reduced to that of purely aesthetic procedures. People still tend to regard us primarily as “beauty surgeons”, but they forget that plastic surgery began as an off-shoot of reconstructive surgery and still deals, to a large

The Swiss health system has an excellent reputation both at home and abroad. Its standing is reflected not only in its importance to the Swiss economy. With one of the lowest child mortality rates and one of the highest life expectancies, Switzerland is also a frontrunner in the international arena.

THE SWISS HEALTH SYSTEM- SUCCESS FACTORS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

High quality services and excellent infrastructure

A range of both systemic and cultural factors is responsible for the high quality of the Swiss health system. The high standard of hygiene and medical care, the modern, well-equipped and accessible high-tech infrastructure of the health system, along with traditional Swiss attributes also relevant to other sectors, such as precision, reliability, willingness to serve and discretion, all combine to convey a sense of the utmost reliability and credibility of the local health system.

Well-developed level of health awareness

The favourable health climate in Switzerland is also largely attributable to a superior level of health awareness among the general population – about

everything from individual prevention measures (healthy eating, exercise, giving up smoking), to acceptance of state health campaigns on issues like vaccination. The inference that health is important and has an inherent value, for which people are prepared to pay a higher price, is definitely also true of the Swiss health system.

Significant research and technology base

The advantages of the Swiss health system undoubtedly stem from Switzerland's strong research and technology base, which has been responsible for many international breakthroughs – particularly in the field of medicine and biotechnology. In addition, Switzerland boasts a chemicals and pharmaceuticals industry of significant economic weight. World

leaders in pharmaceuticals such as Novartis, Roche and Serono all have their roots and headquarters in Switzerland. At the same time, young start-up firms that have successfully captured global niche markets in highly specific areas of biotechnology and medical technology demonstrate the innovation and global competitiveness of Switzerland as a nation.

Great economic significance

Another defining feature of the Swiss health system is its economic significance as one of the largest employers in the country. Around one tenth of those in paid employment, or 437,000 people, work in the health sector, of whom some 150,000 are employed in Swiss hospitals (as of 2001; source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2003). It is therefore hardly

surprising that the pharmaceuticals industry is ranked by the Swiss public as the second most important industry, after the banking and finance sector (source: gfs 2004 consumer survey).

Rising health costs

Like many other countries, Switzerland is faced with the problem of rising health costs. In the year 2001, expenditure on health totalled 46.1 billion Swiss francs (source: Swiss Federal

Statistical Office 2003). Health costs currently account for around 11 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and have risen 5.5 percent since the year 1970. When spending on health is compared with other countries, Switzerland comes in second highest, behind the USA and ahead of Germany (source: OECD Health Data 2003). This rise in health costs can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, the generally sound level of health

achieved through prevention measures is reducing the cost of health care, while on the other hand the demographic trend, the increase in complex and care-intensive diseases and the expansion of services covered by insurance policies is generating substantial additional costs. Yet, despite this rising financial burden, there is still a widespread desire in Switzerland to retain a high quality health system.

SWISS PRIVATE CLINICS – IMPORTANT PARTNERS

Private clinics are important players in the Swiss health system. They complement and expand on the services offered by public institutions. They offer personal services tailored to individual patient needs and characteristically employ highly motivated and superbly qualified doctors and nurses. Swiss private clinics are particularly popular with foreign visitors.

Modern clinic management

There is a long tradition in Switzerland of clinic management on a private basis. With the establishment of the first private clinics operated according to modern management principles, the foundation was laid for the current

standard of Swiss hospital care. Credit for the high quality of care offered by Swiss hospitals today must indeed go to private clinics, as they clearly lead the way when it comes to quality management practices. This particularly becomes manifest with regards to length of stay, complication rate and quality of medical care. Thanks to innovative and creative concepts, private clinics have successfully competed for both patients and doctors in many parts of Switzerland.

Specialisation and efficiency

Unlike public institutions, private clinics are obliged to operate according to business criteria. With their patient

focus, market-oriented approach, efficient structures and processes they are making a significant contribution to cost control in the Swiss health system. Around 170 private hospitals in Switzerland treat approximately 20 percent of the total patient volume. Each clinic offers a variety of different treatments, ranging from specialised surgical disciplines, obstetrics and gynaecology through to rehabilitation programmes. Thanks to their specialisation in key fields, many private clinics have gained an international reputation, making them the clinics of choice for specific interventions.

Comfort and service

A stay in a private clinic is typically associated with an extra level of comfort and personal attention. Private clinics are frequently situated in ideal locations and equipped with the latest hospital infrastructure and tasteful, first-class facilities. They are locally based and often relatively small and easy to navigate, with a distinctly friendly atmosphere. The entire clinic operation is geared to the individual concerns of its patients – allowing it to meet patient expectations in full by offering added value in the form of, for example, outstanding cuisine or additional services.

Very popular abroad

In a country like Switzerland with four official languages, patients can quite reasonably expect the doctors and nurses to be multilingual. This communication bonus, plus the ability to choose their own doctor, the medical

quality and the thoughtful care provided by staff are the main reasons why foreigners or overseas residents opt for a Swiss private clinic. It is quite common for visitors to maximise their stay by combining a medical procedure with a holiday in Switzerland. This is frequently the option chosen by aesthetic surgery patients. Combining medical treatment with a recuperation period is not something driven solely by increasing customer demand. It is now a well-established fact that scenery, climate and a relaxing holiday atmosphere can contribute much to the rapid recovery of patients. Private clinics in a restful location like the mountains or lakeside clearly offer added value in this regard.

Swiss Leading Hospitals

A prime example of the quality focus and service mentality of Swiss private clinics is the organisation known as “The Swiss Leading Hospitals” (SLH).

This is an association of Swiss private clinics focusing on the provision of “Top medical care plus first-class hotel services” – making them very different from conventional hospitals focusing solely on the medical aspects of health care. The leading private clinics of Switzerland, following the example of the “Leading Hotels of the World”, aim to set new benchmarks for innovative solutions in health care. The central objective of the SLH concept is to achieve an ideal synthesis of top-level medical services on the one hand with a highly personal standard of care on the other. SLH was founded in 1999 on the initiative of the Pyramid Clinic at the lake of Zurich in collaboration with the Sonnenhof Clinic in Bern and the Gut Clinic in St. Moritz. Today, the association encompasses 13 leading private hospitals all over Switzerland.

www.swissleadinghospitals.com

PLASTIC SURGERY – A SWISS CORE COMPETENCY

Plastic surgery as it is practised and offered in Switzerland has a worldwide reputation for excellence. It has long since ceased to be the sole preserve of prominent figures in the political, commercial and entertainment world to elect to have their treatment performed in Switzerland. Pearls of Switzerland spoke to renowned Zurich surgeon, Dr. Cédric A. George about the current perception and range of plastic surgery.

What is the meaning of beauty?

The term beauty is based on very individual, culturally determined factors. Features associated with beauty in Europe may be interpreted quite differently in Asia or Africa. As a general rule, it is probably true to say that beauty equates with good health, wherever you happen to be in the world. Perhaps the closest thing to a general definition is the statement that beauty comes from a sense of feeling

at ease with one's self. People who are in harmony with themselves exude a sense of contentment. This inner harmony is expressed in external features like posture or facial expressions. Unfortunately, beauty is often viewed solely from the outside. This external, passive way of seeing things – much the same as viewing static works of art – is far too limited. Beauty is not a consumer good but an individual feeling. It does not depend on perfect proportions but rather on the natural

