

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

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This book was an exciting undertaking and represents the hard work and collaboration of the Young Plastic Surgeons Steering Committee, along with plastic surgery residents and fellows throughout the country. In this updated version of *Essentials*, there are new chapters focusing on current popular topics in plastic surgery, including lymphedema, gender affirmation surgery and composite tissue allotransplantation. Previous chapters were modernized and now include color photographs. The book was written primarily for medical students and other students of plastic surgery to obtain a brief introduction into the specialty and provide references for further reading. It is not designed to be a comprehensive text, but rather an outline that can be read in the limited time available in a burgeoning curriculum. It is designed to be read from beginning to end.

Plastic surgery had its beginning nearly 3000 years ago, when Sushruta, an Indian surgeon, reconstructed the nose by transferring a flap of cheek and then forehead skin. It is a modern field, stimulated by the challenging reconstructive problems of the unfortunate victims of the World Wars. The advent of the operating microscope has thrust the plastic surgeon of today into the forefront of advances in small vessel and nerve repair, culminating in the successful replantation of amputated parts as small as distal fingers and bypassing of lymphatic vessels, only a few millimeters in diameter. Furthermore, these techniques have been utilized to perform the first composite tissue transplantations of both hands and partial faces. The field is broad and varied and this book covers the many areas of involvement and training of today's plastic surgeons. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons is proud to provide complimentary online copies of the Plastic Surgery *Essentials for Students* handbook to all medical students in the United States and Canada.

Continually updated information about various procedures in plastic surgery and other medical information of use to medical students and other physicians can be found at the ASPS/PSF website at [www.plasticsurgery.org](http://www.plasticsurgery.org) and the Plastic Surgery Education Network at [www.psenetwork.org](http://www.psenetwork.org). The information in this book has also been converted to an app in the Android Market and the Apple App store under the name Plastic Surgery Essentials for Students.