

The face-lift that **cells**

FAMI face-lift pioneer Dr Roger Amar tells us about the minimally invasive stem cell technique that has got the world's media talking



Dr Roger Amar trained in Paris before becoming an Assistant Professor in anatomy and plastic and reconstructive surgery in Marseille and then launching his private practice. He has lectured and is published internationally and he has trained surgeons in the FAMI technique in the US and across Europe. He describes the ethos of his work as 'Intuition precedes science'.

Most people thinking of undertaking a cosmetic procedure don't want bigger this or smaller that. They simply want to roll back the years, look refreshed and youthful and most importantly – natural.

Having worked as a specialist facial surgeon for 30 years, I've seen many types of procedure come and go, through fashion or technological advance. I've seen many people undergo quite major procedures only to find the results don't last for as long as expected or leave them with a tight, 'operated-on' look to their face, like the classic face-lift 'mask'.

I realised very quickly that there was a need for a minimally invasive facial rejuvenation procedure that would deliver a younger-looking appearance that was natural to the point that people wouldn't know that the patient had undergone surgery. To this day many of my FAMI patients tell me that their friends and family remark on how well they look but don't guess that they've had a cosmetic procedure.

I started to study what it is that makes us look young to other people and realised that the key factor wasn't tightness or smoothness of skin but that in fact what makes someone look younger is the volume in their face. As we

age we naturally lose volume in some key areas of our face such as around the eyes and brows, mouth, cheeks, lips and chin, leaving the skin sagging and loose.

This was the starting point for the development of the FAMI procedure. FAMI stands for Fat Autologous Muscle Injection. In a nutshell, this is the injection of your own fat cells into key areas of your face to restore the volume needed for a youthful appearance.

The FAMI procedure sees the harvesting of stem cells from fat extracted from the hips, buttocks, thighs or abdomen. The fat is spun in a centrifuge to purify it then injected into or under the facial muscles (depending on the size of the muscle), next to the bone of the skull.

The locations where the fat is implanted is the key important difference from other stem cell treatments, which inject fat cells above the muscle where it can dissipate or move, giving uneven or bumpy results. The FAMI method of injecting under the muscle ensures the fat cells remain in the correct location in the face, restoring facial structure to a youthful state.

The procedure restores the contour, shape and function of the 30 muscles used to form facial expressions and is the result of many years of research and testing by myself and a small number of surgeons I have trained personally to perform FAMI procedures, including my son, Olivier Amar.

FAMI is performed under sedation and local block anaesthetic rather than general anaesthetic (which paralyses the muscle function) as this allows me to immediately see the result on the patient's face and make minute adjustments to ensure the best result.

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Before and nine months after treatment

One of the commonest questions about the FAMI procedure is why I use a patient's own fat and not another type of filler. Unlike many artificial fillers, fat is completely organic and has been used by doctors for more than a century. Using what is called an 'auto-graft' or autologous graft – ie grafting a patient's own tissues – means there is virtually no chance of tissue rejection.

When we take a patient's fat we use a high speed centrifuge to destroy the large fat lobules and concentrate the adipose stem progenitor cells. These adult stem cells, taken from the lower body, can be completely safely injected into the atrophied fat pads (ie the hollows) on the face.

I have performed the FAMI procedure on hundreds of patients over the last few years from my clinics in France and Spain and also during dozens of courses in USA. Patient demand is one of the major reasons I've now started operating in the UK for the first time.

Since developing the procedure (which now has ethical and medical approval across Western Europe and the US) I've seen a wide range of patients including men and women from 22 to 87. As well as offering it for cosmetic reasons, I've performed FAMI on people who have lost facial volume or have scarring due to accidents or birth defect.

My most typical patient is a female in her 40s, 50s or 60s who feels she looks gaunt or tired and wants to regain some of the facial volume of her youth but doesn't want to end up with the tight 'mask' look associated with many surgical facelifts. They also don't want the extended downtime associated with surgery under a general anaesthetic, which is especially important to working women. Most FAMI patients experience some minor bruising (easily covered up by makeup) that lasts up to 10 days. Most patients choose to take up to a week off although many resume normal activities within 2 or 3 days.

The final results of a FAMI procedure are not fully seen until up to six months after surgery as the stem cells rejuvenate the surrounding skin as well as restoring volume. This means the results keep getting better and better for a number of years following your treatment.

Other common questions around the procedure are about safety. Undergoing FAMI is considerably safer than regular cosmetic surgery because there is no general anaesthetic involved and no scalpel, meaning far less chance of damage to nerves, veins etc. The only

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external marks left after surgery are superficial skin punctures, which heal quickly and invisibly. Because I use your own fat cells, the risks of adverse reactions are almost zero.

Many patient's first experience of FAMI is through either a lower or upper face rejuvenation

and they're often so excited by the results that within a year they want to have FAMI performed on the rest of their face. I normally advise people to wait at least a year after their first procedure so they can see the full effect on the volume in their face first. Some patients express concerns about how they can 'maintain' the rejuvenation, in particular what the effect might be if they lose or gain weight. As body weight tends to stay the same if diet and exercise levels remain unchanged, a normal diet is often the best way to 'maintain' the effect, although weight loss will not be as evident in the face following a FAMI procedure and in fact a very small weight gain can reinforce the effect.



before and after treatment

Apart from wanting additional areas of the face treated, FAMI patients rarely return to me looking to have the effects 'topped up' as the positioning of the grafted fat below the muscle ensures the effects are incredibly long lasting.

In fact the procedure was specifically designed to give longevity and predictability of results. Since I first started performing FAMI in 1997 I've had just a handful of the hundreds of patients I've treated return asking for the effects to be boosted with a second procedure on the same areas of the face and those who do are looking for an increased rejuvenation effect.



before and after treatment



before and after treatment

In all the years I've been performing the FAMI procedure in France and Spain, where I am based, I've had a huge number of male and female patients flying out from the UK to take advantage of the skills and experience of my team. As a result I've been looking to offer a clinic in London for some time but have never found somewhere that I felt offered the right combination of technology, superb staff and luxurious surroundings.

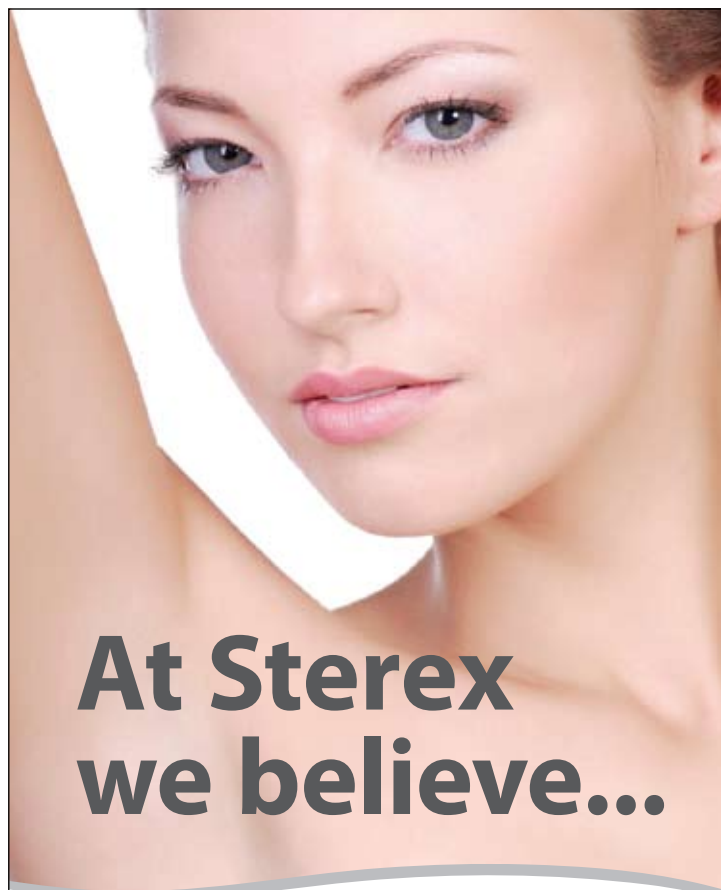
The Cadogan Clinic in Chelsea is only three years old so has the most up to date facilities and some of the best nursing and anaesthetic staff, who I love to work with. It's also beautiful, calm and relaxed despite being right in the heart of one of the busiest parts of London, which makes it perfect for the type of discerning patient who is willing to look beyond the traditional facelift and facial rejuvenation options to find a more modern and effective alternative.

My son, Olivier, is also now an eminent plastic and aesthetic surgeon in his own right, and I'm delighted that he has chosen to join me at Cadogan Clinic. He offers FAMI as part of his repertoire of services but not simply because he is my son but because he recognised that it was the best treatment for facial rejuvenation.

FAMI has been something of a secret in the UK for years now, with only a select few able to travel to my clinics in Europe to see for themselves the difference it can make in bringing about a younger looking face. With my new London base at Cadogan Clinic, I'm excited to be able to share the possibilities with a much wider audience.



before and after treatment



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