ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this paper was to assess the impact of media on attitude towards cosmetic surgery as a solution to the 'perils' of ageing in women aged 60 or over.

Method: Ethical approval was obtained from the University of the Arts London prior to conducting the study. The participants were invited to take part in a one-hour interview which was thematically analysed by two of the authors. Results: Four themes emerged from the data: (i) the use of anti-ageing skin care and sun screen products and regimes; (ii) sources of advice for these, (iii) attitudes towards cosmetic surgery and (iv) the influence of the media.

BACKGROUND

Older women are increasingly using anti-ageing skin care products and regimes in a variety of ways, with advice from different sources and the results are generally not perceived as being effective in reversing the signs of ageing. Despite ubiquitous media images of unattainable, airbrushed 'beauty' and messages equating youth with beauty, the pressure to look good for one's age, look young or look younger, the majority of participants reported that they wanted to look good. The small sample presents limitations for deriving generalisations from the findings.

RESULTS

This small-scale study reports on an analysis of 21 semi-structured interviews with women (mean age 65 years) grouped according to whether they had previously undergone a medical intervention for their skin or not. The interviews were conducted for reasons other than the current analysis and therefore a more focused set of interview questions might provide richer and more relevant responses. In addition, the sample was recruited from a small population of older women at a university in response to an advertisement. A larger, randomly drawn sample from a wider population would present a more representative sample. Despite these limitations, the authors consider the analysis has elucidated many insights and further work is planned.

In sum, we found variations across all participants in terms of their beliefs, attitudes and behavior towards their own ageing skin appearance and regimes as well as to the media's influence on them. For example, participants reported an awareness of, but were not overly influenced by, the lack of older females in the media. Generally, the women in this study were content with their appearance and simply wanted to look good, rather than look young or younger.

REFERENCES


For example, Mootoo, Gohil, Stroever, and Oresajo, (2013) compared self-assessment with expert judgment of the age of women before and after the use of an anti-ageing product. After 4 weeks of product use, subjects perceived themselves as appearing 4.3 years younger, while expert graders saw no difference. Tamburic, Grant-Ross, Labedzka and Daniels (2012) found that self-assessments by those who had used medical approaches to managing ageing skin were more positive than a non-medical group. However, in the same study, Tamburic et al. showed that using a medical approach in the management of skin ageing does not necessarily lead to a perception of youthfulness from others.