



Photo: MCT

patients from Hong Kong, says women come to her for a mixture of aesthetic and functional reasons.

She acknowledges that the operation can pose ethical questions.

"I am an advocate of women's rights and I believe in respecting a woman's autonomy or freedom: women have the right to choose to change their bodies however they like," she says "It is, however, important to determine the motivation for surgery.

"Surgery is just an option. It takes great courage for some women to accept having elongated, large labia. They think it is not normal. Acceptance and surgery are both options women need to weigh."

According to Jano Ha, spokesperson for Kamol Cosmetic Hospital in Bangkok, which is

**\$6.8m**

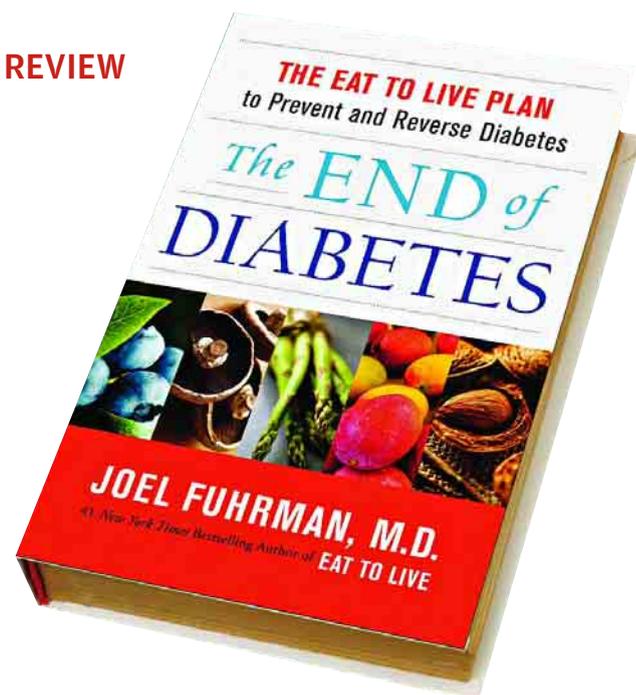
The amount of money, in US dollars, American women spent on having labiaplasties in 2009

headed by leading aesthetic surgeon Kamol Pansritum, the operation can have a helpful psychological effect. "We have found that many people have had mental problems because of a little part of their body that they did not like. Plastic surgery can help them to fix those parts and so to improve their mental state."

Cosmetic surgery often provokes strong opinions, and surgical genital alteration, of course, is always an emotive subject. Labiaplasty might sound a drastic move, but an increasing number of women feel they need it. That could just be because more women have heard about it, but it could also be because more want it, for whatever reason.

As ever with cosmetic surgery, the line between correcting an abnormality and trying to conform to a physical ideal is often blurred.

BOOK REVIEW



Nutrient-rich diet will help you live long and prosper

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In a city where food can be found in nearly every street and at every corner, it's obvious that many Hongkongers live to eat. Dr Joel Fuhrman wants you to do the opposite: eat to live.

Fuhrman, 59, an American board-certified family physician, has been promoting this philosophy since the launch of his book, *Eat to Live: The Amazing Nutrient-Rich Program for Fast and Sustained Weight Loss*, in 2003. A No 1 *New York Times* best-seller, the book is backed by hundreds of testimonials from people who have followed his six-week diet plan and shed a radical amount of weight quickly while boosting their health.

After its success, Fuhrman, a specialist in preventing and reversing disease using nutritional and natural methods, has recently launched a spin-off, *The End of Diabetes: The Eat to Live Plan to Prevent and Reverse Diabetes*. It's a smart move: the diet is the same, but repackaged for its targeted audience.

Excess weight, a high body-fat percentage and a poor diet, after all, are key risk factors for type-2 diabetes, or adult-onset diabetes. In Hong Kong, one in 10 people, or about 700,000, have the condition, and the number is increasing sharply. In 2010, it was the 10th most common cause of death in the city.

Today, controlling the condition depends on drugs that lower high blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure typically seen in diabetics. But Fuhrman believes in eradication rather than medication – by treating the disease's cause through changing one's diet. Drugs, he says, could worsen diabetes in the long run as they cause weight gain.

The basis of *Eat to Live* is what Fuhrman calls a nutritarian diet, "the most effective programme for diabetes ever studied". It's all about filling your plate with the most nutrient-dense foods – green

vegetables, berries, beans, mushrooms, onions, seeds and other natural produce. With such a diet, he says the body ages more slowly and is armed to prevent and reverse many common illnesses. Food cravings are also suppressed.

Fuhrman has devised the Aggregate Nutrient Density Index, which scores food on a maximum of 1,000 based on its density of micronutrients – phytochemicals, vitamins and essential minerals that improve health and longevity. Kale, watercress and collards, for example, score full marks; cola (1 point), corn chips (7) and olive oil (10) are at the bottom of the list.

Essentially, Fuhrman is saying, go vegan. In the book, he provides



In Hong Kong, about 700,000, have adult-onset diabetes, and the number is increasing sharply

two weeks of sample meal plans based on a daily intake of 1,400 calories, including more than 60 recipes (no photos). He backs his diet with solid science – there are 20 pages of research citations – and presents everything in a readable, friendly manner.

In a case series published in the *Open Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 90 per cent of diabetic patients studied were able to eliminate or reduce their medication by 75 per cent, and the average haemoglobin A1C dropped from 8.2 to 5.8 (lower than six is considered non-diabetic; above eight, poorly controlled).

The evidence is certainly convincing, but the diet is restrictive, potentially boring and foodie unfriendly. Eat to live or live to eat? It all boils down to personal priorities.