

# Cinderella surgery: women trim toes to grace feet

» JULIE POWER

Hundreds of Cinderellas are having their toes shortened surgically to fit into high-heeled, high fashion sandals, podiatric surgeons say.

Toes are also being lengthened, and there are reports that some beauticians are injecting filler into the soles of feet so women can wear high heels for longer.

Driven by women's desire to fit into narrow high-fashion shoes, podiatric surgeon Paul Bours has gone from performing 70 toe shortening procedures a year in 2003 to about 250.

He shortens toes under local anaesthetic by using new minimally invasive surgery that requires only a two millimetre incision. Dr Bours then grinds the toe to shorten it.



Dr Bours said his patients often arrived saying "I want a Jimmy Choo shoe."

He said high-fashion designers such as Christian Louboutin made shoes to fit the classic foot shape, where the big toe was longer than the rest, adding the designer had a take-it-or-leave-it approach to sizing.

Another podiatric surgeon, Haydar Ozcan, the owner of the Centre for Podiatric Surgery and Medicine, said he was seeing a lot of patients - predominantly women - with badly shaped feet because of unusually long or short toes that did not look good in sandals.

"They tend to want to have something done to make it look good aesthetically."

Mr Ozcan, who performs about 150 toe shortening and lengthening procedures a year, was reluctant to perform surgery on women only driven by purely aesthetic motives.

In 90 per cent of cases, he only operated on those with unusually short or long toes if they already had foot pain and problems. "Our society doesn't realise that having long or short toes, or abnormally shaped feet, ends up causing problems because most shoes are shaped for Mr and Mrs Right," he said.

But he points out that perfect feet do not exist.



Forgotten woman: A portrait of Su Xi Rong, age 75, whose feet were bound. Photo: Jo Farrell

Dr Bours said improvements in technology had made the surgery to shorten toes faster, cheaper at only \$600, and less invasive with faster recovery times than in the past.

He was happy to help women who wanted to look good in fashionably high heels.

"Why should they suffer? Why

shouldn't they wear the shoes they want because they have an anatomical anomaly?"

Dr Bours said the treatment would prevent serious foot problems because, even without surgery, many women would insist on wearing high shoes. When asked about the parallel between foot binding and toe

shortening, he said they were both about making the woman an "object of desire".

"In a lot of ways, we are very similar. Yet one is from a position of power; and one is a position of subservience, but the similarity is that they are both an object of desire."

Many female executives wanted to

## Bound but not broken by cruel tradition

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Lotus feet is a pretty name for an ugly practice, the binding of Chinese women's feet that continued for 1000 years until the early 20th century.

Photographer Jo Farrell has spent the last eight years documenting the "forgotten women of China" - the now elderly women with bound feet - before they die.

These women's toes were broken and tucked beneath the soles by their mothers to make them more attractive to a partner. Today, survivors are ashamed of their crippled feet, hiding them from their families.

When Ms Farrell gives presentations on foot binding, people are shocked. Yet every culture engages in some form of body modification, from Botox to rib removals, toe tucks and lip piercings.

Ms Farrell was also critical of the

## 'I knew what she had been through.' Jo Farrell

latest trend to shorten toes so women could wear high shoes.

"Altering feet to accommodate the shoe is the wrong way round," Hong Kong-based Ms Farrell said.

Far from living privileged lives, the women Ms Farrell has met have come from peasant families. The first she met was Zhang Yun Ying.

"I held her feet in my hands, they were so soft, in some ways so beautiful, because I knew what she had been through... and my heart went out to her."

Ms Farrell has launched a Kickstarter project. [kickstarter.com/projects/livinghistory/living-history-bound-feet-women-of-china](http://kickstarter.com/projects/livinghistory/living-history-bound-feet-women-of-china)

wear high heels because it gave them height and empowered them, he said. "I can't turn that tide back, but I can help people by using modern technology that lets them comfortably put their foot in a high-fashion shoe," he said. "I am happy to do that because if you don't, they will end up with problems."