



NEWS RELEASE

NEW RESEARCH FOCUSES ON A GROWING PANDEMIC PROBLEM — “ZOOM DYSMORPHIA”

A board-certified dermatologist explains how the shift to remote work and socializing increased negative self-perceptions

ROSEMONT, Ill. (April 23, 2021) — During the pandemic, there was a shift to remote work, and demand for video conferencing increased. Zoom estimates daily meeting participants grew from approximately 10 million in December 2019 to more than 300 million in April 2020¹. Board-certified dermatologists also reported a change with this increased use of video calls: a rise in the number of patients they’re seeing with negative self-perceptions.

At the [AAD VMX 2021](#), board-certified dermatologist Shadi Kourosh MD, MPH, FAAD —assistant professor of dermatology at Harvard Medical School in Boston, director of community health in the department of dermatology at Massachusetts General Hospital and director of the center for Laser Surgery and Aesthetics at Brown Dermatology — presents new research showing a rise in cosmetic consultations linked to patients’ altered perceptions of themselves from video conferencing.

“Society quickly transitioned to a remote way of working and socializing during the COVID-19 pandemic, communicating largely through video calls during a stressful and isolating time,” says Dr. Kourosh. “As reliance on video calls increased, we started seeing the consequences of how prolonged time staring back at yourself significantly impacted our patients in a phenomenon we call “Zoom dysmorphia.”

Dr. Kourosh explains that Zoom dysmorphia is an altered or skewed negative perception of one’s body image that results from spending extended amounts of time on video calls.

In a survey of more than 100 board-certified dermatologists to determine how the shift to remote work affected patient self-perception, Dr. Kourosh found that more than 50% of dermatologists reported a rise in cosmetic consultations, despite being in the midst of a pandemic.

“What was alarming about our research results was that 86% dermatologists surveyed who were fielding these cosmetic concerns reported that their patients referenced video conferencing as the reason for seeking cosmetic consultation,” says Dr. Kourosh. “The increased time on-camera, coupled with the unflattering effects of front-facing cameras, triggered a concerning and subconscious response unique to the times we’re living in. In addition, many people were also spending more time on social media viewing highly edited photos of others — triggering unhealthy comparisons to their own images on front-facing cameras, which we know is distorted and not a true reflection.”

As more people work from home, studies show that 77% of people join video meetings on laptops or desktop computers, 31% on mobile phones, and 13% on tablets.²

“Unfortunately, this is the lens in which people are viewing themselves today, and it’s not accurate and can eventually become unhealthy,” says Dr. Kourosh. “Technology has certainly helped us navigate this pandemic

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in many ways, but it's also important to be aware of its limitations and potential to impact how we feel about ourselves.”

One year into the COVID-19 pandemic, as remote work continues and video calls remain constant, Dr. Kourosh offers the following tips to help people combat Zoom dysmorphia:

- **Assess your technology:** Consider using an external, high-resolution camera for quality video and adding a ring light to control how you illuminate your face, which will also improve how you appear on camera.
- **Adjust your camera:** Try positioning the screen a further distance away from your face and keep the camera at eye level, which can help to minimize the distortion of the camera and improve appearance.
- **Protect your mental health:** Find opportunities to reduce the amount of time spent looking into a front-facing camera by turning off your video on calls when it is not required. It can also be helpful to limit social media engagement. Since photo editing is so pervasive on social media, it's unhealthy to compare your own distorted images from front-facing cameras to edited and augmented photos posted online. It may also help to talk with a mental health professional, who can help a person take a healthier approach to their appearance and offer strategies for redirecting ones focus away from perceived physical flaws.
- **See a board-certified dermatologist:** If you're concerned about your appearance, see a board-certified dermatologist, who can help identify whether a problem truly needs aesthetic intervention and if so, can recommend appropriate products or treatments to help you look and feel your best.

To find a board-certified dermatologist in your area, visit aad.org/findaderm.

¹Business of Apps. March 2021. <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/zoom-statistics/>

²Mix Networks. Video Conferencing Statistics. <https://mixnetworks.com/45-stats-on-how-video-calling-brings-us-closer/>

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About the AAD

Headquartered in Rosemont, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology, founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 20,000 physicians worldwide, the AAD is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the AAD at (888) 462-DERM (3376) or aad.org. Follow the AAD on [Facebook](#) (American Academy of Dermatology), [Twitter](#) (@AADskin), [Instagram](#) (@AADskin1), or [YouTube](#) (AcademyofDermatology).

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