

# Stack heels? Perhaps Sarkozy should try a 2in head implant instead

**WALKING TALL:** President Sarkozy in stack heels during his London visit last week

FOR diminutive men such as French President Nicolas Sarkozy, famously overshadowed by his wife Carla Bruni, a pair of stack heels used to be the only way to stand tall.

But a surgeon has devised a new way of adding up to 2in to a person's height – inserting a silicone head implant.

During a 90-minute operation an incision is made in the side of the head and the implant squeezed in between the skull and the scalp.

Dr Luis de la Cruz developed the procedure to help people who would normally be too short for jobs with a minimum height.

He claims would-be soldiers, police officers, air hostesses, models and firefighters are queuing up for the surgery at his Madrid clinic. The oper-

From **Tom Worden** IN MADRID

ation costs from £4,000 and is performed using a local anaesthetic. Patients are usually released from hospital the next day, and the only sign they have had surgery is a small scar – usually covered by their hair.

Dr de la Cruz, 47, has already carried out the operation on 17 patients.

He said: 'It is a relatively simple procedure that can have a wonderfully positive effect on the patient's life. Like most good ideas it came to me in a flash. I was approached by a young woman who had always dreamed of becoming an air stewardess.

'She was rejected for being half an inch too small and asked if there was any

technique to add to her height. At the time the only way was through lengthening the leg bones, which is an extreme and traumatic option. It got me thinking.

'I carry out many chin implant operations and suddenly I thought, "Why not an implant between the skull and the scalp?"'

Dr de la Cruz, a plastic surgeon for 22 years, added: 'The woman who sparked my interest was the third to have it done. She is very happy with the result and is now an air stewardess.'

The Clinica La Luz in Madrid is thought to be the only place in the world where the operation is performed. But people with long, thin heads are advised against the surgery as the result can look odd.

The average implant is just over 1in (3cm) high and the maximum of 2in (5cm) requires two operations – the first

to stretch the scalp. A woman patient called Eugenia said: 'It changed my life. I look a different person.'

Police forces and fire brigades in the UK no longer have height requirements. But the Royal Navy and Marines still enforce a minimum and the Army and Air Force have requirements for certain jobs.

Most commercial airlines still require their cabin crews are at least 5ft 2in tall.

Virgin Atlantic said: 'It is to ensure the safety of our staff and to make sure they are able to carry out all their duties such as closing the overhead lockers.'

Clinical psychologist Javier Hernandez said: 'People should think long and hard before having this surgery.' He said one man who had leg-lengthening surgery to join the Army deserted after six months because he was unhappy.



**HIGH PROFILE:** Dr de la Cruz explains the operation