



Women's Health Alert

Treating Breast Cancer Through Plastic Surgery

(NAPSA)—When diagnosed with breast cancer, learning the facts about the disease and discussing treatment options can be frightening and overwhelming. This year, more than 175,000 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer. However, if diagnosed and treated the survival rate is greater than 90 percent.

For those women, whose treatment includes either partial or full mastectomy, advances in plastic surgery and breakthrough legislation helps make this devastating news easier to bear.

“Many women who face losing a breast to cancer don’t always realize that they can have it rebuilt through reconstructive surgery,” explains Walter Erhardt, MD, president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. “Plastic surgeons have seen first-hand how breast reconstruction improves a survivor’s self-esteem and confidence after a mastectomy.”

Nearly 79,000 breast reconstruction procedures were performed last year, a 166 percent increase since 1992. The passage of the Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 has aided this increase. The law mandates insurance coverage for breast reconstruction and the alteration of the opposite breast for symmetry for women who have undergone mastectomy.

Discussion about breast reconstruction can start immediately after diagnosis. Typically, plastic surgeons make recommendations based upon the patient’s age, health, anatomy, tissues and goals. The most common procedures include skin expansion followed by the use of implants, or flap reconstruction.

“Board-certified plastic surgeons support patients on the inside and out,” adds Dr. Erhardt. “In fact, many surgeons participate in cancer conferences, fundraising initiatives such as cancer walks



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and organizing patient-support programs that match new patients with previous patients who underwent similar treatment.”

“Breast reconstruction provides both physical and emotional rewards. Often it can represent a new start to their life,” said Nicholas Teti, president and CEO, INAMED, parent company of McGhan Medical, a breast implant manufacturer. “If diagnosed with breast cancer, patients should be sure to talk to a board-certified plastic surgeon regarding treatment options.”

For more information on breast reconstruction, or to find a plastic surgeon certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, call 1-888-4-PLASTIC (475-2784) or visit www.plasticsurgery.org.