The Breast Surgery Gallery: An Educational Tool for People With Breast Cancer or Having Prophylactic Breast Surgery

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The Breast Surgery Gallery is a unique and innovative computer program of digital photographs depicting sequential images of oncoplastic and prophylactic breast surgery. Specialist breast nurse counselors developed the tool to provide education and assist in decision making for people facing oncoplastic and prophylactic breast surgery. This article presents a historical perspective of the development of the gallery and how it can be used during education and counseling. The authors discuss background validation, structure, and testing of the gallery, with case studies that illustrate its flexibility. Data from regular audits of the breast surgery gallery demonstrate the tool’s value. The Breast Surgery Gallery is a user-friendly tool that enables patients to make informed decisions while providing realistic photographs of the postoperative recovery phase.

At a Glance

- The Breast Surgery Gallery is a computer program of digital photographs depicting sequential images of oncoplastic and prophylactic breast surgery.
- By matching sequential images to clients by age, bra size, and ethnicity, the tool provides a realistic idea of postoperative results at staged intervals until 12 month after surgery.
- Case studies illustrate how the gallery can be incorporated into counseling sessions to assist patients who are making decisions about available surgical options.

Patients’ Concerns Before Surgery

As many as 30% of women with breast cancer experience depression and anxiety within a year of diagnosis, with body-image issues and sexual difficulties significantly higher after mastectomy compared to breast-conserving surgery (Maguire, 2000). Discussing treatment options, involving patients in the decision-making process, and offering immediate breast reconstruction have improved satisfaction and reduced psychological morbidity (Ananian et al., 2004; Fallowfield, Baum, & Maguire, 1986; Heller, Parker, Youssef, & Miller, 2008; Keating, Guadagnoli, Landrum, Borbas, & Weeks, 2002; Whelan et al., 2003). However, half of those diagnosed with early breast cancer do not participate in the surgical decision, which may be related to an information deficit influencing their ability to make informed choices (Waljee, Rogers, & Alderman, 2007).

SBNCs at the breast assessment clinic noted fears and concerns raised by people facing surgery for breast cancer, including the following.

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