

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

Lesley A. Kydd, RN, Sheryl A. Reid, RN, and Jillian Adams, MSc, BAppSc

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.

A combined multidisciplinary breast clinic at Royal Perth Hospital in Western Australia includes a high-risk clinic, a symptomatic and surgical clinic, lymphedema management, and a breast assessment clinic. Altogether, about 7,244 clients were seen at all of the clinics in 2009. Specialist breast nurse counselors (SBNCs) at the breast assessment clinic provide education and counseling to patients and their families, as well as education and training to health professionals. In 2009, 443 people with breast cancer attended the clinic (Kydd, 2009), which is about a third of the people diagnosed with breast cancer in Western Australia (Threlfall & Thompson, 2007). Although the clinic caters to men and women, clients are predominantly female, with just six men diagnosed with breast cancer in the past six years (Kydd, 2009). In the process of counseling patients at the breast assessment clinic, SBNCs perceived that people were not prepared for the effects that breast surgery had emotionally and physically and identified a need for individualized information.

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,

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 months 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.

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.

Lesley A. Kydd, RN, and Sheryl A. Reid, RN, are specialist breast nurse counselors and Jillian Adams, MSc, BAppSc, is a staff development educator, all at Royal Perth Hospital in Perth, Western Australia. (First submission August 2009. Revision submitted January 2010. Accepted for publication February 2010.)

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