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What Breast Cancer Patients Don't Know about Mastectomy Options Can Cause Lifelong Disfigurement

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Breast Preservation Foundation Launches Educational Mission Informing Women About Their Surgical Choices
 LOS ANGELES--(Business Wire)--
 In the U.S., more than 180,000 women are diagnosed with invasive breast cancer each year. Many of these women will undergo mastectomy surgery that will result in disfiguring scars because they are unaware of the availability of skin-sparing mastectomies and did not ask their surgeons about this treatment option. Skin-sparing mastectomy is a surgical technique to remove cancerous breast tissue by using the same minimal and judiciously placed incisions used by plastic surgeons for elective breast surgery.

Despite the availability of skin-sparing mastectomies, a recent California study published in *The American Surgeon* found that more than one-third of board-certified breast surgeons surveyed still regularly use the archaic practice of cutting across the whole breast, resulting in unnecessarily disfiguring scars even after breast reconstruction.

"Amidst the shock and anxiety of a breast cancer diagnosis, many women and some physicians consider the appearance of the breasts of secondary importance and not worthy of serious consideration compared to the treatment of cancer," said Joel Aronowitz, M.D., Clinical Chief of Plastic Surgery at Cedars Sinai Medical Center and founder of the Breast Preservation Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing awareness and educating women and their caregivers about skin-sparing mastectomy.

"We know that skin sparing and old style transverse mastectomy techniques are equal in effectiveness as cancer treatments. Therefore, every woman has a right to be informed about choices in mastectomy surgery that improve the cosmetic appearance of the breast and be able to consider all options before embarking on major surgery that will impact their overall quality of life."

The skin-sparing technique uses a simple, small, circular incision around the edge of the nipple area. The surgeon leaves all or most of the overlying breast skin, preserving the natural skin envelope that can be filled with an implant or with a patient's own fat tissue from another part of the body. This skin-sparing technique is appropriate for women whose breast cancer does not invade the skin of the breast and particularly when immediate reconstruction is planned.

Millions of women have benefited from elective breast surgery by plastic surgeons over the past 60 years to correct congenital deformity and improve size and shape to enhance women's lives. Great strides have been made in the understanding of breast surgery and now the medical profession is beginning to apply these advances to one of the most dreaded of operations - mastectomy.

Today, effective mastectomy can be performed with far better cosmetic results. Since new breast cancer cases are among the highest rates ever recorded and breast cancer survival rates are also on the rise it is necessary for patients and their physicians to consider what treatment options will positively affect the patients' overall health, healing and quality of life, post cancer.

As the senior author in *The American Surgeon* study and founder of the Breast Preservation Foundation, Dr. Aronowitz hopes to also persuade the general surgery community to use plastic surgery principles for placement of incisions for biopsy and mastectomy procedures.

"Increased use of these modern, reconstructive surgery concepts will result in a decreased use of standard, centuries old 'cut across the chest' incisions causing severe disfigurement and long-lasting emotional distress for cancer patients. These are the most modern aesthetic techniques and principles that can be applied with the same rigor as is given to the treatment of cancer, and combined can result in a more satisfying outcome," Dr. Aronowitz added.

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