

ABS SUPPORT FOR NEW BAPRAS GUIDANCE ON IMMEDIATE BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

The acute response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing recovery from the peak of the crisis has caused severe disruption to the delivery of healthcare in the UK. However, a carefully planned resumption of normal standards of care is rightly expected by the public. In keeping with this, BAPRAS have produced welcome and necessary guidance for colleagues on the resumption of Breast Reconstruction services.

The evidence base for the benefit of breast reconstruction for women who wish it following breast cancer treatment is proven and incontrovertible. For many women, it is the expected standard of care and should be viewed as such by healthcare managers and policy makers whilst planning local service recovery strategies.

To have to undergo mastectomy is difficult, and where there is no surgical alternative every suitable patient undergoing mastectomy should be offered breast reconstruction; for many the best option will be a free flap. The BAPRAS statement provides clarity on clinical prioritisation based on the patient's fitness to undergo more complex surgery and this is essential to safe delivery.

To aid reconstruction planning, all patients should be discussed within NICE compliant multidisciplinary meetings which include Plastic Surgeons. New ways of working, such as teleconferencing for Oncoplastic MDTs, facilitates participation of all the relevant disciplines. In addition to the immediate and intermediate goals of service recovery, it is vital to recognise that decisions taken today will influence long term service provision. Free flap breast reconstruction is highly technical and skilled. Denying such surgery in clinically appropriate women will not only risk deskilling committed Consultant Plastic Surgeons and their clinical teams, but also risk losing the opportunity to train a highly motivated cohort of trainees. This will have long term implications for the care of women with breast cancer in the UK.

For these reasons, the Association of Breast Surgery (ABS) lends its full support to the judicious resumption of breast reconstruction services including free flap reconstruction as stated in the BAPRAS statement. ABS pledges to work with BAPRAS for the safe nationwide recovery and enhancement of these services for the benefit of patients.



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