



Decisional Factors Influencing Breast Reconstruction Post-Mastectomy: Results from a National Survey

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PURPOSE

The decision whether to undergo breast reconstruction can be complex for women diagnosed with breast cancer. Little is known about the relative contribution of factors in decision-making about undergoing breast reconstruction post-mastectomy. Guided by Social-Cognitive theory, the Cancer Support Community (CSC) conducted a national survey to better understand patients' experiences of the decision-making process around breast reconstruction.

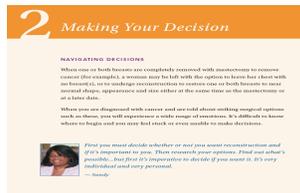
Survey Background

CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY

The Cancer Support Community, uniting The Wellness Community and Gilda's Club Worldwide, is an international non-profit organization that provides free, emotional support and education for cancer patients and their loved ones

FRANKLY SPEAKING ABOUT CANCER PROGRAMMING

Launched in 2001, Frankly Speaking About Cancer (FSAC) is an educational series that provides an in-depth look into a variety of concerns cancer patients and their loved ones face following a diagnosis. Program materials are updated to reflect new advances in knowledge, and include: web-based materials, booklets, and professionally-led workshops held across the country. The most recent program to launch (on January 30, 2011) was **FSAC: Spotlight on Breast Reconstruction**, was developed in part by reviewing CSC's survey results presented here.



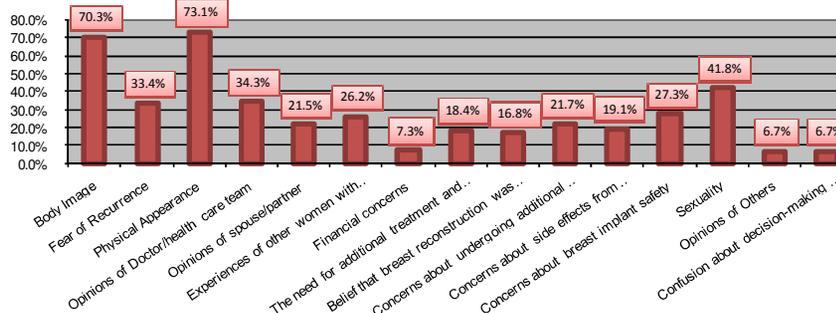
Methods

840 U.S. women with breast cancer (762 eligible for breast reconstruction) participated in: 1) an online survey; or 2) a paper-and-pencil survey at a Cancer Support Community affiliate site in July or August, 2010. Formats were identical.

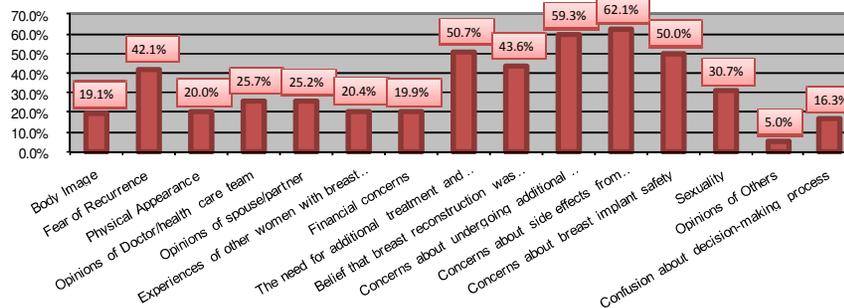
In addition to demographics, information about their diagnosis and treatment, women provided information about:

- Decision about reconstruction, decisional satisfaction
- Experiences and satisfaction with reconstruction
- Details of the decision-making process
- The influence of various psychosocial factors on their decision about whether or not to undergo reconstruction

Factors influencing reconstruction decision "a great deal" among women undergoing reconstruction



Factors influencing reconstruction decision "a great deal" among those opting to NOT have reconstruction



Primary Findings

➢ Participants who chose to have reconstruction (63.2% of participants) generally reported body image (70.3%) and physical appearance (73.1%) greatly influenced their decision, whereas financial concerns (69%) and opinions of others (60.3%) were not influential.

➢ Participants who chose *not* to undergo reconstruction (18.5% of participants) reported concerns about side effects (62.1%), concerns about undergoing additional procedures (59.3%), and fear of recurrence (42.1%) as greatly influencing their decision, whereas sexuality (39%) and body image (33%) did not influence their decision.

➢ For those currently considering reconstruction, physical appearance and concerns about side effects greatly influenced participants (60.7% and 52.7%, respectively). These individuals also had the largest percentage of respondents endorsing experiences of other women with breast cancer (66.1%) as "somewhat" influential in their decision.

Summary and Implications

➢ Results of this national survey offer unique insight into the relative weight of psychosocial decisional factors in this often challenging decision-making process for women.

➢ Results have informed the development of a new national patient educational program, entitled **Frankly Speaking about Cancer: Spotlight on Breast Reconstruction** which, among other goals, aims to provide the necessary tools to empower patients and support effective decision-making tailored to the individual.

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Opted for Reconstruction

"All I ever wanted was for my clothes to fit nicely like they use to. At my age it's not about being sexy nor men. It's about feeling good about myself."

"I almost decided not to do reconstruction because I was sick of surgery and the doctor appointments and I just wanted to be done but I am so glad that I did it. I never worry about what I look like. I don't even have to wear a bra if I don't want to. I still feel like a woman."

Opted Against Reconstruction

"The main reason I chose to not get reconstruction is that it cannot restore to me what I have lost--not the physical appearance of breasts, but the sensitivity and sexual response my natural breasts had. When surgeons figure out how to do that, I'll reconsider."

"I would only consider reconstruction surgery if I was young and not married or not going to marry in my lifetime. It would only be to satisfy my partner... I choose to do what was right for me and hope that the man I married would figure it out. So far, good decision."