



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Changing Breast Cancer Care

(NAPSA)—There's encouraging news about the progress being made in breast cancer care. Working hand in hand with cancer surgeons, plastic surgeons are giving breast cancer patients the most natural-looking breast possible, often making a diagnosis of breast cancer easier to bear. The skin-sparing mastectomy with immediate reconstruction has become one treatment option that is changing breast cancer care.

The procedure requires the patient's surgical team to work in tandem. The plastic surgeon consults with the cancer surgeon to mark where the incisions should be made for an optimal cosmetic outcome. After the cancer surgeon removes the cancerous breast tissue, leaving most of the overlying skin, the plastic surgeon takes tissue from another area of the patient's body, commonly the abdomen or back and replaces it in the area where breast tissue was removed. This skin-sparing mastectomy serves as an alternative to a mastectomy where the breast tissue and all the skin is removed.

"We've come a long way in breast cancer treatment," explains the President of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), James H. Wells, M.D. "A mastectomy began as surgery where everything in the breast area was surgically removed, later more muscle was left, now more skin is left so that patients have more choices."

Because the skin-sparing mastectomy has become an accepted breast cancer treatment, new innovations in the technique are continually being studied. In a recent study in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the official medical journal of the ASPS, a new skin-sparing approach was introduced for slim, small-



**Doctors have come a long way in breast cancer care, making the diagnosis easier to bear.**

breasted patients who often don't have extra tissue necessary for the traditional skin-sparing reconstruction.

"This technique gives smaller women, who opt for reconstruction with an implant, a technique that will leave an unnoticeable scar and a great cosmetic result," reports the study's co-author Bryant Toth, MD, San Francisco.

Dr. Wells reminds breast cancer patients interested in breast reconstruction to research all of their options. "If your cancer surgeon does not regularly work with a plastic surgeon they may not have the resources to provide all reconstructive information to you," says Dr. Wells. "When discussing reconstruction techniques with your surgical team, if a skin-sparing mastectomy is not discussed, make sure to ask about it."

For more information on breast cancer awareness or to find a plastic surgeon in your area certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery, visit [www.plasticsurgery.org](http://www.plasticsurgery.org) or call 1-888-4-PLASTIC (1-888-475-2784).