Breast surgery: A problem of beauty or health?
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Chapter IX

Summary
Because its meaningfulness for women, the female breast plays a special role in surgical treatment. The diversity in breast surgery and its wide spread impact on women’s mental and physical health has lead to this thesis. The research was planned with the intent to get a better understanding of the influencing factors in breast surgery. Several aspects have thus been investigated in the previous chapters. They are summarised below:

Chapter II

Psychological and functional impairment in breast hypertrophy
A cohort study of 50 women with various breast sizes was undertaken. By magnet resonance imaging of the spine, physical examination and the use of a validated questionnaire it was proven that breast weight has an influence on development of disorders of the spine as well as on the prevalence of depressions among women. These data should challenge the basis for resource allocation decisions with regard to breast reduction.

Chapter III

Risk factors in reduction mammaplasty
Complication rates after surgery are based on various factors. In this study we hypothesized a negative impact of smoking on wound healing after breast reduction surgery. This was proven and furthermore, we were able to show a trend, that even postoperative smoking cessation decreases the negative impact of smoking.

Chapter IV

Psychosocial aspects in breast reconstruction
The main aim of reconstructive breast surgery is to lower the distress for women facing breast cancer and mastectomy. Beside showing the positive psychosocial effect of breast reconstruction, another aim of our study was to enlighten the question if breast reconstruction should preferably performed immediately or as an delayed procedure.

According to our data immediate breast reconstruction potentially avoids a phase of high psychosocial impairment for the patients and as a consequence the information about the possibility of breast reconstruction should be given at the time of
breast cancer diagnosis. However, recent meta-analysis doubt the reliability of our and other studies regarding this topic, due to methodically flaws. The aim for the future should be to recruit reliable data in trials taking the confounding parameters into account.

Chapter V

Morbidity after breast reconstruction
The donor-site defect after harvesting tissue from the abdomen goes along with the risk for impairment in abdominal wall function and herniation. The measurements of abdominal wall weakness were restricted due to the used methods. In our study we evaluated the reliability of functional ultrasound of the Rectus Abdominis muscle to measure abdominal wall weakness.

Functional ultrasound seems to be a cost effective, easy available and reproducible method to visualise muscle function.

Chapter VI

Patient satisfaction after breast reconstruction
Nowadays a patient searching for breast reconstruction has a choice between many different techniques. Since the main aim of breast reconstruction is to restore psychological well-being for the patient, the aim of our study was to investigate the influence of the technique being used for breast reconstruction in correlation to the patient satisfaction. The results indicate that neither operation type nor complication rate nor revision rate independently correlated with patient satisfaction. Therefore other pre-operative factors like expectations, and personality characteristics should be centre of further investigations to improve patient satisfaction after breast reconstruction.

Chapter VII

Correlation between MRI results and intraoperative findings in silicone breast implants: the role of the linguine sign
Implant rupture remains a risk factor after breast augmentation or reconstructive surgery. The health issue of an implant rupture still is uncertain. Therefore diagnosis of implant rupture and its consequences is essential in postoperative management
of patients carrying breast implants. In this process MRI seemed to be crucial in detecting breast implant rupture. For this reason the reliability and sensitivity of MRI in diagnosis of implant rupture in our patients was evaluated. Due to a low sensitivity and reliability being seen in our results the structure of breast implants was analysed microscopically as well as by ultrasound. This showed, that alterations in the implant shell might mimic implant rupture without subsequent clinical consequences. Therefore the use of MRI versus ultrasound as a standard screening method for breast implant detection should be questioned and further investigated.

Breast Surgery - a problem of beauty or health?

In conclusion the sum of the investigations enlighten that breast surgery is not a question of beauty OR health, but more a question of beauty AND health.

Due to impairment in physical or mental health women undergo breast surgery. On the other hand breast surgery might have a negative influence on both, physical and mental health. A subjective perception of impaired beauty might lead to reduced mental health and subsequently women seeking breast surgery. In case of cancer, the disease, and therefore disturbed physical health results in an impairment of beauty. One should be aware that a mental health disease like a body dismorphic disorder might cause a disturbed self perception and should be considered as a contradiction for breast surgery.