



Bariatric surgery and body image

Tuesday 7 May, 2013

A study of New Zealanders who have undergone bariatric surgery suggests that most would like some form of body contouring surgery after the initial weight loss procedure, delegates to the 82nd Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told.

Dr Heather Leaver, an Auckland based Surgical Trainee, and Mr Jonathan Wheeler, a Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, felt that literature assessing the demand for body contouring surgery was limited and therefore undertook a survey of patients who had undergone bariatric surgery at a single, multidisciplinary centre in Auckland.

“With more than a third of New Zealanders deemed to be overweight (36.3%), and a quarter deemed to be obese (26.5%), we felt it was time to survey the body perception of those who had undergone this increasingly common form of surgery,” Dr Leaver said.

“We mailed questionnaires to those who had undergone a bariatric procedure at least two years earlier. There was then follow-up contact by telephone and, if necessary, the questionnaire was reissued.

“Data gathered included smoking status, height and weight, body image related data, and the effect of redundant skin on daily activities. This information was then supplemented with data from an online database including the date and type of surgery, and pre-operative Body Mass Index.

“Of the 256 patients sent the questionnaire, we received 115 replies. This cohort comprised 86 females (75%) and 29 males (25%), with a mean of 2.76 years since their bariatric surgery. Eighty-seven per cent of respondents felt they had excess abdominal skin and 84% said they would be interested in its removal.

“Eighty-two per cent would like to have their excess upper thigh skin removed and 78% would have upper arm skin removed.”

Dr Leaver told delegates that it was likely that this cohort of patients was representative of the increasing number of people undergoing bariatric surgery in New Zealand, and that a growing demand for post-operative body contouring surgery could be anticipated.

Approximately 1200 surgeons from New Zealand, Australia and around the world are attending the ASC, which runs from 6 to 10 May and is being held at Auckland’s Skycity/Crowne Plaza Convention Centre.

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