Breast Reconstruction Awareness Day

ASAPS Member Launches National BRA Day in Canada

On October 19th 2011, Canada celebrated its first ever National Breast Reconstruction Awareness Day (BRA-Day). Breast Reconstruction Awareness Day is an initiative, created by ASAPS Member Dr. Mitchell H. Brown, designed to promote education, awareness and access for women who may wish to consider post-mastectomy breast reconstruction.

Practicing in Toronto, Canada, Dr. Brown specializes in aesthetic and reconstructive breast surgery, body contouring and facial aesthetic surgery, and is the founder and co-course director of the Toronto Annual Breast Surgery Symposium, Canada’s largest annual medical symposium of its kind. Dr. Brown took note of many studies siting a lack of breast reconstruction taking place in both the U.S. and Canada, primarily because women did not realize that reconstruction was a viable option for them. He felt that women needed access to such procedures in a timelier manner. While breast cancer awareness is celebrated for an entire month, he felt that some measure of attention needed to be focused on reconstruction, which lead to his idea of BRA day.

Once the idea had struck, Dr. Brown put his thoughts into action, creating a steering committee to help oversee the event. This committee included plastic surgeons specializing in breast surgery, plastic surgery nurse specialists, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons, medical device industry representatives and breast cancer support groups. His goal was to have representation from all of the regions in Canada, and to ensure that each major area had some kind of visible event on the very same day.

To mark this historic day, events were held all across Canada to promote both awareness and patient access to reconstructive breast surgery. Events were organized on both the local and regional grass-roots level in order to take advantage of the unique environments, populations, and diverse resources that exist across Canada.

Working together, a variety of diverse efforts were created to help raise awareness of BRA day. One store, Sleep Country, a major mattress retailer, displayed BRA Day posters in their stores throughout Ontario and British Columbia. Okanagan Health Group (OHG) and their supporters had a wrap-around bus banner traveling for five days, which held an image along with breast cancer statistics, which OHG entirely self-funded. Fundraising T-shirts were created and sold, which helped raise both awareness and funds, and Dr. Nick Guay launched the Canadian Collaboration on Breast Reconstruction Information website. One imaginative way to gain attention took place in Kelowna, BC, where a flash mob was held on August 5th 2011 with almost 100 people dancing in support of National Breast Reconstruction Awareness Day.

On BRA day itself, a variety of different events were held. At the Rouge Valley Ajax/Pickering and Centenary Hospitals, Informational Kiosks informed visitors about BRA-day and offered educational materials. Throughout the country, leading experts presented educational sessions on such topics as the latest techniques in breast reconstruction, navigating the medical system, healthy lifestyle modifications, body image changes that surround mastectomy and reconstruction, and therapy options to enhance and improve recovery. Participants had the opportunity to meet and speak with local surgeons and health team members, view exhibits of devices used in reconstruction, and link directly with breast cancer support

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organizations. In some cases, attendees also had the opportunity to meet women who had undergone reconstruction, seeing firsthand what the procedure can achieve.

For example, Scarborough General Hospital in Toronto held a Patient Information Session, that included discussions on all aspects of breast reconstruction, including implant choices, pedicled and microvascular flaps, and ancillary procedures such as nipple reconstruction and tattooing. Another session, called "Breast Reconstruction: My Story," featured four women talking about their breast cancer journey, their decision to have reconstructive surgery, and how it has impacted their lives.

Other informational and educational events included sessions given by such physicians as Martin Jugenburg, MD, Stan Valnicek, MD, Scott Williamson, MD, Peter Lennox, MD, Sheina Macadam, Amanda Fortin, MD, Arianna Dal Cin, MD, Ronen Avra, MD, Joan Lipa, MD, Laura Smell, MD, Don Jones, MD, Melinda Musgrave, MD, and Christine Tang, MD, among others.

Dr. Brown envisions BRA day growing each year nationally, eventually developing into an internationally recognized event, and planning for next year is already underway. BRA day has received vows of support from both The Aesthetic Society and ASPS, and many are taking the concept to their own countries.

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ASAPS congratulates Dr. Brown on the success of BRA day, and looks forward to its future growth.

For more information about BRA day, please go to www.bra-day.com or email info@bra-day.com. BRA day is also on Twitter at http://twitter.com/mybraday and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/breastreconawareness.