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**MASTECTOMY AND RECONSTRUCTION IN BREAST CANCER - PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS, A Lehmann, Comite Pathologie Mammaire. Institut Gustave-Roussy - 94805 VILLEJUIF CEDEX - FRANCE.**

Between 1977 and 1982, a systematic study was made of 150 women who presented consecutively for mastectomy, followed by delayed reconstruction. Its purpose was to monitor and to describe psychological adaptation to these treatments. Patients were all seen at the time of initial evaluation and again two or more years after reconstruction. Ninety of them also received psychotherapy, which provided research hypotheses as well as the methodology for psychological evaluation. Non-directive interviews were used throughout.

All patients, irrespective of personality, underwent a specific psychological process referred to as "mourning work". Fear of death and the loss of a specially invested part of the body, cannot be accepted overnight, and inevitably requires a personal transformation which must be activated over a period of months, and may be emotionally painful. The nature of the outcome of this process will determine acceptance or otherwise of breast reconstruction. Only after such a period has successfully been negotiated, can significant new life investments be made. Reconstruction is in no sense to be regarded as an essential aspect of the treatment of physical disease and is always a matter of personal choice. Its success will depend upon realization and acceptance of the truth, namely, that it cannot fully compensate for the loss of the breast. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not so much associated with actual outcome, i.e., objective result, as with subjective response. Continuing search for the 'lost' breast will result in failure to accept the new image, even where a good aesthetic result has been achieved. Overall, 93% of the group were satisfied, would do it again and would recommend it for others. Seven per cent expressed dissatisfaction for surgical and/or emotional reasons. In conclusion, reconstruction provides a satisfactory narcissistic restoration for a large majority of women, thus allowing them to resume a full and active life.