

#Breastreconstruction: A Qualitative Analysis of Aesthetic and Reconstructive Breast Surgery Photographs on Instagram

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BACKGROUND

Patients are increasingly searching the Internet for information on both aesthetic and reconstructive breast procedures. Social media sites, such as Instagram, have become platforms for patients to learn about desired procedures and view before-and-after photographs. Such information can guide expectations of the healing process and aesthetic results. This study aims to assess the quality, comprehensiveness, and adherence to Plastic Surgery Foundation (PSF) and American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) photographic standards, of Instagram posts on breast reconstruction surgery.

METHODS

On August 8, 2020, the authors queried 20 breast reconstruction surgery-related hashtags. The top 30 posts by US plastic surgery practices comprising patient photographs were included. Post content and captions were analyzed. Each image within a post was compared with the photographic standards for Breast Images established by the PSF and ASPS.

RESULTS

A total of 280 posts containing 1-10 individual images and 1-5 different views were identified. 83.9% of posts were made by individual plastic surgeons, while 16.1% were made by group practices. 88.2% of posts did not disclose patient age, 81.1% did not state the time that post-operative images were taken relative to the procedure, 96.1% did not include the recovery time, and none mentioned complications. 73.6% of posts failed to frame photographs according to national guidelines, 41.4 and 35.4% of posts are not positioning and disrobing patients appropriately, respectively. 55% of posts had a visible scar. Additionally, 8.6% of posts were about procedures inconsistent with the queried hashtag. On average, posts are utilizing 17.2 ± 8.4 hashtags.

CONCLUSION

The photographs of aesthetic and reconstructive breast surgery on Instagram are not standardized and show poor adherence to established photographic guidelines by PSF and ASPS. Plastic surgeons should take this into consideration as Instagram remains a widely used patient resource.

Table 1. Content Quality of Instagram Posts on Cosmetic and Reconstructive Breast Surgery

Caption Characteristics	Number of posts n, (%)
Inclusion of Patient Age	
No	247 (88.2)
Yes	33 (11.8)
Inclusion of Post-Op Time Since Procedure	
No	227 (81.1)
Yes	53 (18.9)
Inclusion of Recovery Time	
No	269 (96.1)
Yes	11 (3.9)
Inclusion of Complications	
No	280 (100.0)
Yes	0 (0.0)
Photograph Characteristics	Number of posts n, (%)
Inclusion of Scar	
No	26 (45.0)
Yes	152 (54.3)
Framing Consistent with Guidelines	
No	206 (73.6)
Yes	74 (26.4)
Patient Positioning Consistent with Guidelines	
No	116 (41.4)
Yes	164 (58.6)
Patient Disrobing Consistent with Guidelines	
No	99 (35.4)
Yes	181(64.6)