



DECONSTRUCTING BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

On Breast Reconstruction Awareness Day, Rethink Breast Cancer wants to see unreasonable breast reconstruction wait times eliminated in Ontario

(**October 19, 2016** – Toronto, Canada): Today, [Rethink Breast Cancer](#), the young women’s breast cancer movement, urges the Ontario Government to commit to reducing breast reconstruction wait times. Breast reconstruction should be considered an essential part of a breast cancer patient’s care plan and addressed in a timely matter. According to Rethink’s report [De/Constructing Reconstruction Wait Times](#), released earlier this year, in Ontario there is currently a 1-2 year wait for breast reconstruction.

Since 2014, Rethink Breast Cancer has been advocating for improved access to breast reconstruction for women in who have been diagnosed with breast cancer but require delayed reconstruction due to their cancer treatment as well as those who are at high risk of getting breast cancer and require a prophylactic mastectomy to help prevent breast cancer.

In 2015, Rethink surveyed 49 patients and 32 doctors in Ontario to look at the issue of breast reconstruction and the effects of delayed wait times. The report found that women are waiting an average 111 days longer for breast reconstruction than the target wait times of 182 days set out by the province. It also confirmed that younger women are more likely to opt for preventative surgeries and reconstruction, and may reconsider these procedures if they are forced to wait.

“We have heard from far too many young patients that they have had to wait for up to 2 years for reconstruction following a breast cancer diagnosis or high risk designation,” says MJ DeCoteau, Founder and Executive Director, Rethink Breast Cancer, “And we know this wait has serious impacts on their emotional and physical well-being.”

Knowing you have an extremely high risk of breast cancer and waiting for prophylactic surgery can be devastating for some patients. It can also mean a cancer diagnosis if the wait is too prolonged. Unfortunately, two of the 15 BRCA positive women who participated in the Rethink survey were diagnosed with breast cancer while waiting for a prophylactic mastectomy.

“As a plastic surgeon, it is very challenging to attend to my patients as quickly as I would like without adequate resources like OR time,” says Dr. Toni Zhong, University Health Network Breast Restoration Program, Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. “And given that we have such effective means of prevention, just one patient diagnosed while waiting for prophylactic surgery is one too many.”

In their report, Rethink Breast Cancer laid out three very clear recommendations to improve wait times for breast reconstruction in the province:

1. Add prophylactic mastectomy with immediate reconstruction to the list of cancer surgeries funded by Cancer Care Ontario (CCO). This will allow hospitals offering the procedure to access funding to make it more available for patients and increase the equity in wait times across the province.
2. Ensure that data on these surgeries be collected and measured so CCO can better understand the demand for this surgery and assign resources accordingly.
3. Increase surgical resources in the province (like OR time) to benefit all patients looking to access breast reconstruction.

The organization has heard that the first two of the three recommendations have been quietly implemented by CCO and applauds them for this progress. But many women are still waiting too long for reconstruction and Rethink would like to see the Ontario Government commit to additional surgical resources to help alleviate the back-log.

For more information visit:

rethinkbreastcancer.com/get-involved/deconstructing-breast-reconstruction

About Rethink Breast Cancer™

Rethink Breast Cancer's mission is to empower young people worldwide who are concerned about and affected by breast cancer. Rethink is the first ever Canadian charity to bring bold, relevant awareness to the 40s and under crowd; foster a new generation of young and influential breast cancer supporters; infuse sass and style into the cause; and, most importantly, respond to the unique needs of young women going through it. By taking a breakthrough approach to all aspects of breast cancer – education, resources, advocacy, community building, and fundraising – Rethink is thinking differently about breast cancer. To find out more about Rethink Breast Cancer, visit rethinkbreastcancer.com.

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