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## The lived experience of breast reconstruction following a mastectomy in women with breast cancer: A phenomenological study

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More women with breast cancer are expected to have breast reconstruction following mastectomy, due to the increasing survival rates of breast cancer and the change of the National Health Insurance policy to cover breast reconstruction since 2015 in South Korea. However, there is little information on experience after breast reconstruction of women with breast cancer. The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experience of breast reconstruction following a mastectomy in women with breast cancer. Data were collected during 2015-2016 by individual in-depth interviews from eight women with breast reconstruction following mastectomy for breast cancer. Verbatim transcripts of all interviews were analyzed using phenomenology to identify major themes on experience of breast reconstruction. As a result, 10 major themes emerged: 1) Breast reconstruction as a compensation for oneself in the life of self-sacrifice in the past; 2) Taking a sole responsibility on decision of breast reconstruction; 3) Disappointment resulting from physical pain and complications; 4) Being closeted due to a popular misconception between reconstruction and cosmetic surgery; 5) Lack of empathy about femininity from others; 6) Free from other's gaze into the breasts; 7) Regaining confidence with womanly shape; 8) Restoring oneself intimidated by cancer; 9) Becoming an advocator of breast reconstruction; and 10) Dreaming a bright future with new breasts. This tentative result highlights both sufferings and pride as a cancer survivor with breast reconstruction. The paradoxical aspects of experience will help oncology professionals develop effective counselling program for women with breast reconstruction pre- and post-operatively.

### Biography

Myungsun Yi has completed her Doctor of Nursing Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo, USA. She is the professor of College of Nursing Seoul National University in South Korea. She established and operates the Korea Breast Cancer Cyber Center ([www.kbcc.org](http://www.kbcc.org)) to support women with breast cancer. She had served as the president of the Korean Oncology Nursing Society, the Korean Association for Qualitative Research, and the Asian Oncology Nursing Society. She has published more than 100 papers in peer-reviewed journals and has been serving as the associate editor of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Oncology Nursing.

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