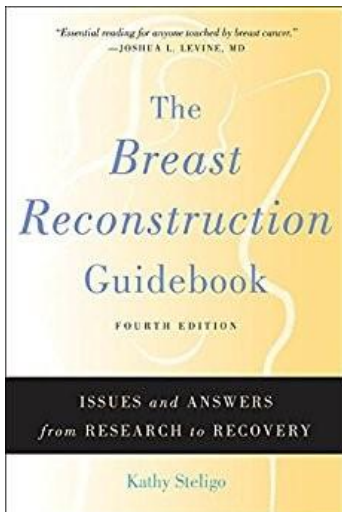


**MACMILLAN  
CANCER SUPPORT**

# BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**The breast reconstruction  
guidebook. Issues and answers  
from research to recovery (2017)**

Steligo K.

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University  
Press, 2017.

4th edition.

288pp.

ISBN 9781421422961.

**Average star rating 4.0 out of 5**

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This is a perfect read for anyone diagnosed with breast cancer if there is a possibility of a mastectomy. It is mostly easy to understand; some parts are more complicated but I just read them over again for more understanding. I used the glossary a few times but overall it is easy to understand. The book is a good size, the font is not too small, the layout is good and the pictures very useful.

I really love this book; it's exactly what it says on the cover – a guidebook – and has been so useful. I love the quotes from people that have experienced the same thing as me – some of them gave me goose bumps. I like that it looks at the advantages and disadvantages. It made me more confident asking questions of my doctor and surgeon.

I read this book cover to cover, then went back to the areas that affect me. I will always go back to this book to read something that I am concerned about, check information about my recovery, or prepare for the next stage I will be going through.

Unfortunately, when I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I found it hard to focus on reading anything about cancer, but I highly recommend anyone who wants help with the difficult decisions to read this book. It is a big help and has really helped me.

**I have just finished reconstruction surgery (46-55) (October 2018)**

This is most useful for someone with breast cancer, as it is full of useful information and in-depth advice. It is also useful for carers.

The author is a brilliant writer. Everything is clearly written; the language and text are explanatory and there is nothing in it not to understand. It is written for people with breast cancer and is sensitive to their feelings. The book is well designed – I like the cover design – and the layout is good. It is a bit lengthy, but it is a book that you can pick up and put down and use as a reference and guide. I like the explanations and detail in each chapter. A good read and not long winded.

**I had breast cancer nine years ago (46-55) (May 2018)**

This is an excellent read for anyone considering breast reconstruction. It looks at the various types of reconstruction in detail giving both the pros and cons of each. It also contains sections on how partners and friends can support the person going through reconstruction and would also be a good reference book for health professionals.

It is easy to read and the author explains technical terms in layman's terms. There is also a glossary of terms. It is well laid out, with photos and illustrations where appropriate. The typeface is a good size and the chapters and sub-headings are laid out in such a way that if the reader wants to dip in and out of specific reconstruction methods they will be able to do so. I wasn't aware of any inaccuracies and feel that the author has carried out extensive research into all types of reconstruction.

I like how the author gives an unbiased account of the different reconstructive methods, including the pros and cons of each; this gives the reader sufficient information to make an informed decision as to which method(s) may be right for them. However, it is written for an American audience and some of the methods may not be available in the UK. It also contains a fair amount of information on how to navigate the American insurance system. This is obviously invaluable for the American market (it made me grateful for the NHS) but can be skipped.

I would happily recommend this book to anyone considering breast reconstruction. It is a good, accessible read, although I would probably advise them to avoid reading the sections that deal with the American insurance system.

**Living beyond breast cancer and continuing to be monitored following ovarian cancer (56-65) (January 2018).**



This helps to inform and perhaps overcome the fear everyone has when they're first diagnosed. The details refer to treatment in the USA but echo UK treatment, although I saw no reference to mammoplasty, an option that is becoming more available. I also don't like the references to American medical insurance – very worrying.

It is a well-produced book; the language is appropriate and the illustrations add emphasis to the text. I might recommend it but only to those who want to know. Some people prefer not to research – this isn't healthy but it is their choice. I think everyone should find out what they're facing, then perhaps they wouldn't be so afraid.

**Breast cancer patient (66-75) (May 2018)**

This is a book about surgery to the breast (and for Americans – obtaining insurance pay-out for such treatment). Therefore, anyone wishing to know more about those matters will be well served. It covers the range of treatment stages, but focuses on reconstruction. It is therefore useful for those who wish to educate themselves about breast surgery for the treatment or prevention of breast cancer.

It is divided into four parts. Part one is about mastectomy and the different aspects of this, including male mastectomy and lumpectomy. It discusses the surgical methods used and how they affect reconstruction. Part two is about reconstructive procedures, taking the reader through different techniques that can be used to rebuild the breast. Implants and autologous techniques are described in detail, along with pros and cons. Adjusting the remaining breast to match the new breast is discussed as is nipple and areola reconstruction. Part three is about the operation: pre-op, post-op, recovery, and moving forward. It provides a countdown to surgery (in some instances only useful to those in the USA, but other bits are still helpful), what to expect in hospital and how to prepare for your return home. It also takes the reader through potential problems, as well as taking them beyond recovery and back to normal; many folks don't realise how traumatic that is, so it is good to see it covered here!

Part four is about finding answers and making decisions. It is useful to guide you in choosing your treatment wherever you live. But most this seems to be biased to those who will be having their treatment in America and how to ensure that their insurance will cover their treatment and accommodate their reconstruction preferences. It does have a helpful section for those who will not be having the construction, but who will support, care for or be a friend of someone who is.

This information MAY now be out of date: "If you're a previvor, prophylactic bilateral mastectomy (PBM) is the most effective way to reduce your breast cancer risk, lowering the odds of a diagnosis by 90 percent or more". However, it was reported on 12 January 2018 that young breast cancer patients with faulty BRCA genes have the same survival chances as those without. I highlight only because books may go out of date with the advancement of science and technology. Readers should check their facts carefully before relying on information in books.

There are a lot of acronyms, but they are written in full the first time they are used. There is also a glossary, notes where references have been made in the text, details of resources and an index; all useful to help the reader move back and forth in the book to access the most relevant information as needed. I reviewed the kindle version and found it easy to read. It is easy enough to enlarge images, tables and photographs to view them and they are useful and purposeful, not just padding; they are inserted in appropriate places and do not hinder the flow of text. The author writes in an informative tone at just the right level for someone who doesn't know all the technical terms, including full descriptions of what each procedure involves.

Having all the information about how mastectomy (or lumpectomy) is carried out, immediately, or subsequently, followed by the different reconstruction methods, is extremely useful. However, it is American. This may or may not be a problem for readers about to have a procedure, but non-American readers must filter out the non-helpful facts. Quite large sections will not apply to readers in other parts of the world. However, the information about treatment, surgical procedures and the research and decision making processes is useful to anyone considering reconstruction.

**Living with breast cancer (46-55) (January 2018)**



My difficulty with this book is that I was operated on within 10 days of diagnosis. This was fantastic – hopefully similar for most breast cancer patients in the UK – but gave me no time to source or read about my options. I'm also not sure if, during the whole shock of diagnosis, I would have thought to have sourced anything other than the information I thought I needed – from my breast cancer nurse, patient leaflets, and the Macmillan website. If you have a slow-growing cancer and weeks or months before your operation to research and choose the options, then it may be of use but, if not, I can't understand why a breast cancer patient in the UK would buy this book.

The cover is visually appealing and lays out exactly what will be covered. It is well laid out, easy to read and understand, taking you logically from diagnosis, through pre-surgery, the operation, post-surgery, to recovery. There is an extensive glossary. The illustrations show what kind of look can be achieved by each procedure and make it easy for you to choose the operation that suits you best. I like the tone and the support that the book gives the reader and it is not patronising. The author is also a breast cancer survivor, which makes it more credible. I didn't notice any inaccuracies, but the US healthcare system is very different from here. For example, US patients can choose a hospital and surgeon, treatments and drugs differ slightly, and the information about how to pay for surgery is not required here. Therefore at least a quarter of the book doesn't apply to patients being treated on the NHS. There is also very little on the "strattice" method, which was what I chose; this leads me to question how often it is updated.

I read this book eight months' post mastectomy, so I read it out of interest and to see if I could learn anything more about what had happened to me and what may arise in the future. It is well written and if I were a patient in the USA I would give it five stars but the information is of limited use here. Large sections were not relevant to me and I did not find anything new that could not be obtained here from the Macmillan and Breast Cancer Care websites, the NHS surgeon and the cancer care nurses. I am unsure what support is provided in the USA and this book may well be exactly what is needed there but at \$27 it is not worth buying in the UK.

**Breast cancer patient, post mastectomy (46-55) (February 2018)**



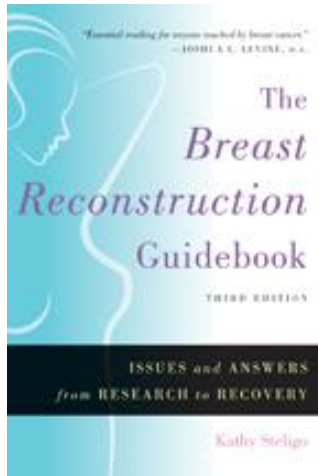
This book could be very helpful to an American woman battling her way through medical insurance. I doubt it is appropriate even for those who live in Canada and Mexico; the procedures described and the advice on how to deal with your insurance provider are US specific. The descriptions of non-surgical procedures are also confusing; compared to the UK, doctors seem to have a much larger role, doing procedures that would be done here by a breast care nurse, and the nurse seems to do tasks that would be done by a physiotherapist. Everything seems different.

It is well researched, if a bit light on the downsides of procedures, e.g. reabsorption of transferred fat and some reabsorption of tissue flaps, or of implants wandering around from their original location. It is probably a bit long and academic but it is crammed with useful information. It is very text based, although there are good diagrams of reconstruction methods. It is reasonably easy to understand for those in the USA, if motivated to do so. It is full of what would appear to be very useful tips on how to navigate the US healthcare system. All references to websites are US based.

I don't think this book is much help outside the USA. The information that crosses borders, and is useful for women in the UK, is available elsewhere. It might be a bit academic in its approach, even for those that live in the US, although with health insurance being difficult to navigate, it might be essential reading. I wanted to like it, as it is well researched. However, I found the references to only US-based support and the detailed descriptions of the procedures that you should expect, being so different from what is done here, very irritating. It would not help set expectations about what is to happen. That would have to come from elsewhere for those outside the US. Looking back over my review notes, I can't believe how often I have written "not like that here" – the procedures are so different. Because of these differences, I could not recommend this book to women in this country.

**Breast cancer (2004) patient; five attempts at reconstruction before DIEP flap in 2016 (66-75) (December 2017)**

## The following reviews are of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2012)



### **The breast reconstruction guidebook. Issues and answers from research to recovery (2012)**

Steligo K.

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

3rd edition. xii, 252pp.

ISBN 9781421407203.

**Average star rating 4.3 (out of 5)**



This is useful for patients or health professionals. It is best for patients that have more than one reconstruction option, perhaps more suited to those facing a delayed reconstruction when there is time to consider options. It starts with the mastectomy decision and moves on to reconstruction, then questions and answers. There is no bias towards any procedure described. It is written at a level that does not patronise the reader. It is not over medical and each chapter starts with an inspirational quote and ends with quotes from people who have been through the process.

I understood it, but it uses a lot of technical language and those just diagnosed may find it too much at once. The glossary explains the technical terms, and there are also references and useful websites. The paper is slightly off white, which reduces glare, and the text is printed clearly. There are plenty of before-and-after photos (in black and white, no gory pictures!) and clear, simple drawings support points in the text. The matter-of-fact tone enables the audience to make their own decision on what will suit them best, depending on medical history, body shape and lifestyle.

There is an error on page 112, where it states that: “The likelihood of the ducts being damaged or severed increases if your nipple is removed from your breast during surgery or if your reduction involves a lot of tissue”. It is obvious that if your nipple is removed that the ducts will be severed.

I really enjoyed this book, although it took quite a while to read. However, it is aimed at people with a good knowledge of the subject so I wouldn't recommend it to anyone newly diagnosed who has to make a fast decision – it would overload them. Someone who has more time to mull over each option would get more benefit. It is American so there some sections may not apply to the UK. The reader could just select the sections that apply to them, rather than read the whole book.

**Living with breast cancer (36-45) (June 2013)**

People like me, who want to know all the details about their options, will find answers and comfort in this book. It would have given me the answers I needed. Consultants could also use it to support discussions about surgery.

It is extremely informative, supportive, and detailed but does not blind you with science; for those with no medical knowledge, it is easy to understand and written in an accessible, but not patronising, style. The layout is good, with good use of diagrams and photos, and the information is easy to find.

I like its no-nonsense approach; this is a factual book that addresses the reader's questions and it does so very well. I wanted to understand what was going to happen to me. You're making huge choices about not only your surgery, but also the healing process and your future treatment plan, so it's important to know all the facts. I especially like the sections on choosing a good surgeon (not always possible on the NHS), the pros and cons of each surgical option, and the hints and tips for families

It is more geared to the USA than the UK, in terms of the references to medical insurance and private healthcare, although, for those using private treatment, this may still be relevant. Some of the timescales may be elongated and you don't always have the time to go through the stages described; for example, one chapter refers to "four weeks to surgery" but, after referral and getting my results, I had less than three weeks. Overall, however, I would have no hesitation in recommending it to others.

#### **Breast cancer patient (36-45) (September 2013)**

For anyone faced with reconstruction, this excellent book has clear, honest information about the choices available. It was very useful for me – I am currently awaiting the next step in reconstruction after tissue expander experience. The author explains each procedure in enough detail to enable anyone to make an informed choice and she is very honest about the length of time it can take to feel comfortable again after the different procedures. It will help patients, carers and relatives to understand the options, the effects on the patient and the timescales for healing.

It is very easy to understand and there is a very useful glossary. It is American so some details are different and not all the procedures described may be available here but it covers most of the options I have been offered. I like the simplicity of the layout; the illustrations and photos are relevant and give a better understanding of what can be achieved. It is obvious that the author has had personal experience of breast cancer and reconstruction; she has a wonderful understanding of the problems and feelings that can arise.

It is good to have information that is easy to understand when you have so many things going on in your mind. This book will help patients make an informed decision or provide a guide to the questions they may want to raise with their surgeon or breast care nurse. I like the fact that the author lists the advantages and disadvantages of each procedure. I recommend this book to anyone in this situation.

#### **Breast cancer survivor, awaiting further reconstruction surgery (46-55) (November 2013)**



This is a very useful guide and reference for breast cancer patients and their partners or close family. It explains the need for surgery, emphasises that reconstruction is not the only option and describes the alternatives. It then has detailed explanations of the various options, along with useful information on preparing for surgery, what to expect in hospital and afterwards at home, timescales, recovery and the possible issues and problems that one might face, including life post surgery. It is very useful for anyone faced with mastectomy and those providing close support to help them understand the options and consider questions to ask the medical team.

It is very easy to follow and understand, with supporting diagrams and photographs. Technical details are explained in the text and glossary. There are many facts but the text is interspersed with comments from real patients. Each chapter starts with an uplifting quote, from Einstein to Dolly Parton! Given the amount of information, the book is well laid out and the clear typeface makes for an easy read. Illustrations are in the text, relevant to the page, so no leafing backwards and forwards.

My concern that the book might be too slanted towards treatment in the USA was unfounded; it proved to be an informed, valuable and enjoyable read. The chapters about shopping for a surgeon and paying for reconstruction are not particularly relevant here, but could offer pointers to women exploring private provision.

This book is very useful for those who want as much information as possible. It helps weigh up the pros and cons of the reconstruction route. It offers an informed insight into issues such as recovery periods, possible problems, and the length of the reconstruction journey and the author presents a balanced view of the procedures and how a patient might feel. It builds up your knowledge to aid informed discussion and decision making when taking advice from your medical team. I was glad to be in the privileged position of reviewing it some ten months post-mastectomy, as I had no guidance about reconstruction. It has helped me a great deal, and I'm pleased to say it helped me make a more informed decision about prosthesis versus reconstruction.

### **Breast cancer patient (46-55) (June 2013)**

I have not yet decided on breast surgery as a solution for my non-invasive DCIS diagnosis. One of the reasons for this is that no one will discuss reconstruction. I do not want to decide to have permanently deforming surgery for a diagnosis that may not affect me during my lifetime, unless I know what will happen to me and what the possibilities are afterwards. This book answered a great many questions.

It is a fantastic guide and would be most useful to someone considering surgery. It even includes real-life before-and-after photos, although more photos would be better and it makes very little reference to smaller breasted women (32A). It is very easy to understand with a comprehensive glossary. I do however wonder what the bias is towards the processes and systems used for reconstruction in the USA compared to the realities of the NHS. It would be great to have the same book written for the UK.

### **Ductal carcinoma in situ breast cancer patient (46-55) (May 2013)**

This is essential reading for anyone who has to make a quick decision about reconstruction. There is very little information in one place so this is very useful to help you decide. Health care professionals may give you choices but they rarely have time to give the full picture. This book gives you a full account of what each method entails, its advantages and disadvantages. It is factual, matter of fact and includes a table for you to compare the methods. It explains in easy language what a mastectomy is and why it is necessary. It also has some good advice on preparing for surgery, what to expect in hospital, and what to expect when you are back home. This would have been extremely useful before my surgery and reconstruction – I had very little information and found it hard to decide.

The language is appropriate for non-medical readers and is easy to understand with a glossary for terms not understood. The cover is appropriate and the typeface and size of print are easy to read but the paper is not good quality. The photos and illustrations add to the book and make it easier to understand the explanations in the text. The section on preparing for surgery would be better earlier in the book.

It is written in the USA and refers to their health care system and insurance system. It assumes that most of the methods will be available and in most cases this is not so. It also looks at how to choose a surgeon – in my area only one could do reconstruction – so it could give you an unrealistic idea of what is available.

### **Breast cancer survivor (November 2013)**

I wish I had read this book before my reconstruction. It gives an honest insight into reconstruction and I like the fact that it takes you on a journey from beginning to end and gives you choices. It is easy to understand and the language is spot on as are the photos and illustrations (much needed).

In 2004, I underwent bi-lateral reconstruction and chose my own plastic surgeon whilst under the Royal Marsden. Over the years, I have not met a patient whose breast surgeon performed the reconstruction; it has always been a plastic surgeon. This is not always the case, but we certainly have many plastic surgeons in the UK that perform excellent breast reconstruction.

The research that has gone into this book is excellent. It inspires you to go forward and I definitely recommend it, although some may prefer not to read the finer details.

### **Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (March 2013)**

This is a very useful book. It covers all aspects, before, during, and after treatment. It is authoritative, demystifies, and has been written and revised with tender consideration and accuracy. I wish I had a copy to refer to when I was shopping for treatment options.

### **Recurrent breast cancer survivor (46-55) (March 2013)**

Anyone thinking about breast reconstruction will find this book useful. It answers your questions and clarifies the side effects, problems and feelings. It describes in detail the different types of reconstruction, how they are done, what is going to happen, what could happen, how painful it might be, and your choices. It discusses things that you may not think to ask yourself or that could come up in the future.

The language is very easy to understand and there are explanations with pictures. It is American so there is some information about their health care system, but this doesn't affect the information offered. I have been through breast reconstruction twice and really recommend this book.

### **Living with breast cancer (46-55) (March 2013)**

This is useful for patients or carers to understand the basics of reconstruction. It is most useful during the first six months after diagnosis, in the early stages of decision making – it would be great to be referred to this book as an immediate source of information. It will also be useful for non-cancer health professionals, e.g. physiotherapists, holistic therapists, or district nurses.

It is very well laid out in the order in which issues arise and broken down into sections with charts and illustrations. It is nicely written and informative about real-life topics in an uncomplicated way, without being condescending. The cover design is tasteful and the book feels like quality material to hold/flick through. It has fantastic diagrams and charts and good images for reconstruction results, although I would like more illustrations of reconstructions on more women (you can never see too many to see how the results vary!). It is tastefully done and extremely informative giving just enough detail to satisfy people's curiosity without insulting their intelligence. I have found other literature does not have enough detail!

I found it accurate in relation to my experience and what I have learnt from other sources and literature over the past two years. It is a very useful tool to assist people to make important, life-changing decisions; it gives the facts, without sugar coating the truth. A great book, extremely well written; I wish it had been available while I was making life-changing decisions about my mastectomy/reconstruction two years ago!

### **Secondary breast cancer patient (26-35) (June 2013)**

This is a very useful book for those needing reconstruction or who have already had it. Even carers will find it useful for understanding the journey to reconstruction. It is very easy to understand; it is full of technical jargon but the author explains it very well. I like the way she explains the options so that the reader can make up their own mind. I wish I'd been given this book when I had my reconstruction. I recommend anyone needing reconstruction to read it before making a choice. Medical staff should make it available to their patients or recommend it to them.

### **Breast cancer survivor having had reconstruction surgery (46-55) (September 2013)**

Anyone undergoing breast cancer surgery should read about their reconstruction options. This book is easy to understand (as easy as it is to explain complicated surgical techniques), very detailed and gives a great range of options, it even mentions the newer possibilities (fat stem cells graft). It is useful for deciding when and how to go ahead with reconstruction after a mastectomy or a lumpectomy.

I would like to see more emphasis on reconstruction after radiotherapy, which really affects the quality of the tissue left. In my case, I developed fat necrosis from my initial surgery then had a re-excision followed by radiation, which caused radiation fibrosis. I was advised that more surgery would result in more scar tissue and pain.

Another issue I would like to see addressed is that of post surgical compression bras and their importance in healing, which is not at all mentioned when undergoing surgery (I was advised to leave the hospital in a sports bra!). I would also like to see more about using breast reduction techniques to reshape the breast after a lumpectomy. As we all know, implants do not last forever and grafts are hard to recover from and sometimes fail horribly. Using reduction on both breasts with a bit of fat graft to fill in the "details" might be an option for some women.

#### **Former breast cancer patient (46-55) (October 2013)**

This book will be beneficial to patients, carers, family and friends, as well support groups, and GPs. It will enable the patient to make informed choices and the carer to understand the choices made. It is very easy to understand; the author explains the medical jargon in plain and simple terms and the illustrations are very good and clear. The look and size of the book are appealing and the paperback format means it is very easy to carry in a handbag.

When I was researching my cancer, I found that there was a lack of information about the treatments available and I would have found a book written in this way to be very useful. I would recommend this book to patients, carers and family members. As a cancer buddy, I volunteered to read this book to get a better understanding of the choices and procedures available. It would be best placed in cancer information centres, libraries and all service areas that patients and carers may access.

#### **Hodgkin lymphoma patient and volunteer cancer buddy (46-55) (November 2013)**

This is a fantastic book for anyone considering breast reconstruction and for those who have already decided and want to know what will happen throughout all stages of reconstruction and after. Whilst primarily aimed at those considering breast reconstruction, it's also suitable for carers, family and friends and useful for care givers because it is so comprehensive and includes research into potential future treatment options and supporting academic references.

The author approaches the subject in a very logical manner. She guides the reader through every stage, from the initial decision, through all the current treatment options (available in the US but also mostly available in the UK too) and preparation

for surgery to post-op, recovery and beyond, including the emotional aspects. She not only describes why a mastectomy could be part of your treatment plan, but also discusses what to expect at every stage and does so taking into account a patient's perspective. The book includes images as well as recovery times and generally what each option might look like, including what might go wrong. I do feel that some of the recovery time descriptions are somewhat optimistic but at least it shows how quickly recovery might be. It has sections specifically for carers, family and friends, which my husband thought would have been useful to him in the early days.

It's not too big (240 pages), so not scary and could fit in a handbag. The layout enables the reader to dip into areas of interest. It's very comprehensive and most welcome of all for me it has several illustrations and photographs of the different techniques. During my treatment, I didn't see any visual examples and this would have satisfied that aspect of my own journey. The author manages to combine a surgical journey with a patient's perspective. Her writing style empathises with the emotional journey that a patient and those around might experience. It is very easy to understand, using everyday words in the main as well as providing a handy glossary for technical/medical terms. I didn't notice any inaccuracies although as it is written for a US audience, some of the decision making is not the same as in the UK; however, it's still incredibly informative.

I recommend this book for those considering breast reconstruction; it has been the most useful one I have read. I really, really wish I had known about it when I was first told I would need a mastectomy. It has the answers to so many questions that I had at the time (and had to use the internet to find answers). While it is clearly geared towards those planning to have reconstruction, it does also include information about not having a reconstruction as well as types of prosthetics and while it does promote the potential benefits of reconstruction, it does so in an unbiased way.

This would be an excellent resource to offer patients at the start of their potential reconstruction journey. Some people may not like to know too much detail and prefer to be guided by their consultant but this book is written with sensitivity and provides a very good balance of information, the process and a range of images and drawings. It would be great to have a UK version.

#### **Moved forward from breast cancer (46-55) (January 2013)**



This informative, honest and interesting book covers all aspects of breast reconstructions. It is easy to understand and the language is appropriate. However, it's an American book so the references to costs aren't relevant to British patients.

It's very useful and I definitely recommend it.

#### **Breast cancer patient (36-45) (January 2014)**

This is a very useful book for health professionals working with breast cancer patients, as it is well written, detailed, and explores psychological as well as physical and practical issues. It is an awful lot for others (particularly the newly diagnosed) to take in and the content would be better divided up and preferably abridged.

The chapters follow the process from diagnosis to recovery and beyond, and the format is such that you don't have to read it all at once, but can take time to digest the information. The descriptions of procedures and possible options for mastectomy and reconstruction are detailed and a lot of consideration is given to the potential psychological impacts of diagnosis and surgery, not just from the patient's perspective, but also family and friends. It covers possible problems in an empathetic way and I particularly like the thread throughout, of how maintaining a positive attitude and a sense of humour help to keep perspective and aid the healing process! The anecdotes keep the narrative more subjective and more user-friendly.

I like the frank approach to a sensitive subject. I really like the emphasis on emotional intelligence that comes through – it is sensitively written, honest, empathetic, and has enough light touches to prevent it being too heavy going. It is written in such a way as to be easily accessible to those without much understanding of human anatomy or surgical procedures. There is a comprehensive glossary and it is well referenced; it also lists websites and resources for further research (USA only). The author makes good use of illustrations to enhance explanations. The style of writing is clear and informative, without being glib, patronising or overly technical. The cover drawing annoys me; she looks deformed, surely not what the author wants to convey?

The projected recovery times for many of the procedures seem unrealistically short! There is heavy reference to radiotherapy – almost as if it is standard practice – and very little mention of chemotherapy and its potential implications. This might reflect the medical model in the USA, though it does help to stress the implications for reconstruction, if radiotherapy is required. However, my main criticism is that it contains an awful lot of information for someone just diagnosed! The chapters on choosing a surgeon, funding your surgery, and many of the references and websites are not applicable to the NHS. The foreword is a bit scary; it almost implies that double mastectomy is the only way to go! The author needs to ditch the Lance Armstrong quote considering recent revelations!

Adapted for the UK, this would be useful for breast care professionals and their client group. Some chapters would have been very helpful for me in making my decision and knowing what questions to ask beforehand! As it stands, I would suggest certain chapters, rather than the whole book, and I would make the reader aware of the differences between US and UK healthcare systems. It is a good reference book; if only the books I read for my nursing studies had been as well-written!

**Breast cancer survivor (nipple-sparing mastectomy, with LD flap reconstruction, chemotherapy, and subsequent 'corrective' surgery (implant to healthy breast)) (46-55) (March 2013)**

This book is very informative and straightforward, with lots of easy to understand explanations of the options available to anyone considering a reconstruction. The sections on recovery and after care are particularly good and I like the list of pros and cons and the experiences of other women. The layout is good and the diagrams informative. It is very American, so some parts (for example, insurance) are confusing, and I did not like the statistics in the first few pages. However, I wish that I had been given something like this when I was deciding to have my reconstruction.

### **Breast cancer patient (36-45) (June 2013)**

This is most useful for breast cancer patients facing mastectomy and possible reconstruction. It has a very good, detailed breakdown of the procedures and an insight into approaches being explored. It examines all considerations when making a decision about the most appropriate procedure, including long-term implications.

It is relatively easy to understand. There are many technical surgical terms but they are explained in the text and there is a comprehensive glossary. It is very well laid out, in four sections, all in logical order. Tables are used to good effect to show general recovery phases and times for different procedures. It is written primarily for women having treatment in America, so the large section devoted to choosing and paying for procedures is not of much relevance to Britain.

As someone who had a bilateral mastectomy with immediate reconstruction in 2001, when the aim was to give a good look when dressed, I found this book very informative. I have always been happy with the result but it is amazing to see how techniques have developed and just how good the cosmetic results can be in the hands of a skilled surgeon. I don't know if all the procedures shown are available on the NHS, but the book could be used to discuss what is possible with your surgeon.

### **Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (March 2013)**

This book goes into many of the options available and provides constructive information on the benefits and risks of each. I like that it doesn't try to paint a rosy picture. I also like the quotes from patients, which appear balanced. I found the 'what to expect' elements in terms of recovery timescales and difficulties most useful.

It is a relatively easy read and there is a glossary. Colour images would give a better impression of before and after. Apart from that, the quality, design and print size are good. It is American, so many of the references to organisations are not appropriate for the UK. I probably would have found it more useful before surgery; I've had my reconstruction so I already know much of the information.

### **Breast cancer survivor (36-45) (April 2013)**



This very detailed book explains the different options available. It is very easy to understand once you have undertaken some of your own research but could be a bit daunting if you just diagnosed. The pictures help you to make an informed decision; my plastic surgeon did not show me any pictures at any of our meetings.

It is almost too informative about some options but less so about others. For example, I had a DIEP flap reconstruction but it gave much more information about other types. Some of the options do not appear to be relevant to the NHS.

I have given it three stars because I found it too clinical. It is intended to give some insight into the different options available, but it does little to pull you into the book and it is more like a textbook than an informative yet user friendly book. Newly diagnosed patients may find it a little frightening.

**Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (November 2013)**

I found this book very easy to read and understand and the diagrams further helped my understanding of the different procedures offered. For someone facing tough decisions post-mastectomy it would be very useful.

I am not sufficiently au fait with the different procedures to notice any inaccuracies but I question that nipple conservation is practised in the UK and this may mislead some readers. There is also too much emphasis on American medical and legal processes, which could confuse some readers in this country where we are fortunate to have both the NHS as well as private practice.

I found the section on preparation before consultation, in terms of questions and what to expect after procedures, very useful. The chapter 'Making difficult decisions' is particularly valuable, reinforcing the fact that everyone has a choice about which procedure to have, or indeed if they should have reconstructive surgery at all.

**Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (July 2014)**



This book is written for an American audience and therefore much of the information is not relevant to a British patient. It describes the different options and procedures in detail, but as, in my experience, patients do not have access to plastic surgeons or the various possible procedure options, I did not find it overly helpful. There are some useful practical tips mentioned to help a patient before and after surgery, but Macmillan Cancer Support and the breast care team provide these. I would not recommend this book to a UK patient for these reasons.

**Living with breast cancer (46-55) (November 2013)**





I don't rate this book at all. It shows you everything that can go wrong. Perhaps I am a bit too knowledgeable, but there are too many negative comments about reconstruction, although it did not cover what went wrong with mine.

It is a slow read because so many things don't apply to the UK; we don't have the option of some of the treatments because we can't choose a plastic surgeon, usually our breast cancer surgeon carries out reconstruction.

Things have moved on since this book was written; the author dismisses liposculpture – increasingly popular in the UK – because it is not really used in the USA. I had my first done last week. It is truly amazing; I need another two, maybe three. It is my own tissue so won't be rejected and I won't have some of the other complications, also my tummy is getting flatter as that's where the fat was harvested. I would highly recommend it, but the book does dismiss this as “European”.

On the upside, some facts are good, but I don't like the overall approach and wouldn't recommend the content. It is quite scary reading about some of the things that can go wrong. If you have made up your mind you want reconstruction, this book will put doubts in your mind. That just isn't fair.

**Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (August 2013)**

## Further information

### Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

### Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

### Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

**Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.**

**It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.**

**We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)**

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