

## Extended Abstract

# The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Allopathic Breast Reconstruction Surgery: A Monocenter Study

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## Abstract

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy occurring in women, the second most common malignancy in both genders and the third leading cause of cancer death for 2018 according to World Health Organization (WHO) [1]. Breast cancer constitutes a burden for both developed and developing world, while in developing world the new cases show an accelerated rise because of the modern lifestyle. Significant for breast cancer control and prevention is the awareness of the women with appropriate screening. If early diagnosed, complete cure is possible [2].

Breast reconstruction surgery after breast cancer surgery is a cornerstone for women who wish their chest and their breasts to look as natural as it used to be before. It is really important due to the fact that the psychological and physical impact after fighting with breast cancer is very big and often women show low self-esteem, uncertainty for the future, anxiety disorders, even depression, while the scars remind them of this journey [3]. Breast reconstruction helps them overcome these obstacles, as they gain back their confidence, they feel powerful again and they can celebrate their victory against the breast cancer [4].

The new coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) started in Wuhan, in China, in December 2019 and was declared by the WHO as pandemic on 11 March 2020 and accounting until November 2020 more than 60 million cases and more than 1.4 million deaths [5]. The pandemic has a heavy impact on hospitals and the health system in general and in many areas worldwide the medical care collapsed. Because of the coronavirus crisis, breast cancer care and especially breast cancer reconstruction surgery was impeded and most of the patients were afraid for their lives [6].

Breast reconstruction after curative or prophylactic mastectomy or any kind of surgical breast intervention in order to cure or avoid breast cancer is of utmost importance given the fact that the functional role of the breast to the lives of all women is special and sacred as it is the organ used for breast-feeding but also it is the organ that contributes aesthetically and sensually to the femininity and sexuality of the women. All these women carry an enormous and heavy psychological burden including the fear, the insecurity and even the low self-esteem. Breast reconstruction contributes to the improvement of the functional and psychological impact after breast surgery.

Breast reconstruction could be either immediate or delayed and alloplastic or autologous. I will focus on the alloplastic breast reconstruction as it is widely used and preferred both by patients and surgeons.

Since 2020 the whole planet is facing the COVID-19 pandemic and a new era of restrictions and changes in our lifestyle and in our lives. The pandemic affects the humanity in a tremendous way with millions of deaths worldwide and high risk of infection and transmission of the disease. Consequently, the governments in the light of scientists' help had to take measures in order to minimize or even to stop the spreading of the virus.

The health care systems are influenced radically from the pandemic and in some occasions the medical care collapsed. During for this is the need of the hospitals to save some resources such as hospital beds, protective equipment and personnel time, whilst some of the departments are transformed and exclusively used as COVID-19 clinics. So, in most of the hospitals the patients were carefully selected and prioritized based on the emergency of the case in order to perform a surgery due to the surgical limitations. Some surgeries were minimized, postponed or even cancelled in order to limit the first bout of COVID-19 infection and the emergency state that most of the countries worldwide set, hospitals modified their schedules and their working activities. These modifications may be applied until now in some areas. The reason the exposure to COVID-19 and to protect both patients and personnel.

Furthermore, this was the situation and to the Casa Austria Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinic of Timisoara in Romania, which is part of the Timis County Emergency Clinical Hospital, where my study will take place.

The purpose of this study is to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the alloplastic breast reconstruction surgery at the Casa Austria Clinic.

The results suggest that the immediate alloplastic breast reconstruction with tissue expander was almost exclusively used during the pandemic period, even though the number of the patients was radically reduced, it was the safest procedure as no patient had any post-operative complications and the hospitalization duration was decreased.