

Health Watch

Bala physician breaks new ground in plastic surgery

By Judy Thomas

Main Line Life Correspondent

Nicola Foggie had to have her cancerous breast removed in 1998. She was only 38.

"Being a woman in America, your breasts are everything to you," Foggie said.

Fortunately, she found a skillful surgeon and a sympathetic ear in Dr. Emily Pollard of Bala Cynwyd.

Today, Foggie is enthusiastic about her transition from breast cancer patient to breast cancer survivor.

"She really, really cares about her patients," she said of Pollard. "It was a very emotional time." Pollard's ability to "perform it so expertly meant the world to me."

According to Pollard, "every day people are having plastic surgery and discussing it 'more openly.'"

But her "reality-based" plastic surgery won't make you look plastic. Or put you in the poorhouse.

These are two of the biggest myths about her craft, she explained.

"We're not into 'extreme' plastic surgery," she said of herself and her associates at Philadelphia Plastic Surgeons, PC. "We can make you look better in and out of your clothing" and "improve your contour."

Board-certified in general and plastic surgery, Pollard concentrates on plastic surgery because she can achieve tangible results. "After a while in surgery," she said, "I wanted that next step."

Breast surgery constitutes the bulk of her practice. Procedures range from \$3,000 to \$6,000 and, with the exception of augmentations, are increasingly covered by health insurance companies.



Main Line Life staff photo — FCTE BANNAN

Dr. Emily Pollard says her empathy helps her connect with clients that are generally female.

Ironically, the client base is almost entirely female, and most surgeons are male. Pollard said her gender gives her a sympathetic perspective.

"I can empathize with them when they say they're having trouble with their hips or their tummy," Pollard said.

She's also a rarity as an African-American female surgeon. Pollard estimated there are "probably less than 30 board-certified African American women" plastic surgeons in the U.S.

Foggie said her initial visit was reassuring because of Pollard's patience in answering her and her mother's questions and her professionalism. Reassuring photographs of past reconstructions

convinced Foggie to proceed with the surgery.

Pollard and her breast surgeon, Dr. Diane Gillum, collaborated in a 7-1/2-hour procedure. Foggie never had to wake up without a breast.

With a \$5 co-pay and the support of Aetna U.S. Healthcare, she received a new breast and a simultaneous "tummy tuck." The tissue Pollard used to reconstruct her breast, she explained, was taken from her abdominal area.

The immediate reconstruction, Foggie said, positively impacted her "psychological state and recovery."

Her radiologist, mammographer and other "experts in the

field," she said, "marvel at the job she did."

Pollard — who lives in North Ardmore with her husband, Dr. Robert Wilensky, a cardiac surgeon in Philadelphia — has been practicing since 1991.

She admits she is prone to nerves prior to a procedure.

"I'm excited for them," she said of her patients. "You have to have that edge because you care."

Pollard takes an integrated approach to health. "It's not enough to just suck the fat," she explained. She refers her body contour patients to a local health club and encourages them to get into an exercise program.

Her surgery, similarly, seems to have a total effect on her patients.

A nurse and mother in her late 20s who recently underwent a breast reduction said Pollard's procedure was a seminal moment in her life.

At 5-foot-6 and 140 pounds today, she said she had suffered physically and emotionally with exceptionally large breasts since puberty. For years, she said, running, exercising and dating were uncomfortable.

Two weeks following her operation, the woman reported minimal pain and scarring. "I'm just thrilled with it," she said. "I'm a...beautiful 34C," she said. "I can't believe it."

Her new breast size, she said, was determined by her build. People will no longer "look at me and see my breasts," she said. "It won't be a focus point."

Pollard indicated her patient's satisfaction is rewarding.

"I've seen women be very, very happy with the results. That makes me happy," she said.

"I'm excited for (patients). You have to have that edge because you care."

Dr. Emily Pollard