

University of Toronto Breast Cancer Reconstruction Fellowship,

January 2 – June 30, 2014

Fellow: Dr. Marina Barandun

Sites: University Health Network, Mount Sinai Hospital

Supervisors: Drs. Toni Zhong, Anne C. O'Neill, Stefan O.P. Hofer

Sponsor: Allergan Canada

I had the great honour to be the breast cancer reconstruction fellow at the University of Toronto from January 2 – June 30, 2014. I spent six months under the supervision of Drs. Toni Zhong, Anne C. O'Neill and Stefan O.P. Hofer at the Toronto General Hospital, Princess Margaret Cancer Center and Mount Sinai Hospital.

During my fellowship I was involved in most of the breast reconstruction cases including autologous reconstructions with pedicled and free flaps, alloplastic reconstructions and balancing procedures. In addition, I participated in various other locoregional and especially microsurgical reconstructions following sarcoma resection or cancer ablation in the head and neck. For autologous breast reconstructions the DIEP flap is the most frequently used flap with at least two bilateral and one or two unilateral DIEP flaps per week. Less frequent, TUG or SGAP flaps are used. Other autologous techniques included pedicled latissimus dorsi flaps – usually in combination with a tissue expander as a 2-stage procedure. In addition, all up-to-date alloplastic breast reconstruction techniques are performed in great numbers.

In the OR, I typically acted as first assistant or primary surgeon under the supervision of one of the staff surgeons. A typical week consisted of 3 – 4 days in the OR and 1 – 2 days of clinic. On clinic days, new patients and follow-ups were seen in the morning whereas the afternoon was mainly reserved for small procedures such as nipple reconstruction, areola tattooing, excision of skin lesions and more. On-call duties were shared between the breast fellow and the microfellow(s) and was on a 1 in 2 or 1 in 3 basis. However, fellows were on-call predominantly for flap take-backs which rarely occurred. Research was encouraged during the fellowship and there was protected time to focus on academic work. During my 6-month fellowship I was able to attend and present at the Annual Breast Surgery Symposium in Toronto as well as at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgery in Montreal.

It was a great pleasure to work with and learn from the three supervisors of this fellowship. Not only are they outstanding professionals and world-leaders in their field but even more important they are excellent teachers and role-models. Together with the supporting staff they create a very positive and motivating working atmosphere.

The Breast Cancer Reconstruction Fellowship at the University of Toronto provided a wide exposure to all kinds of breast reconstruction cases in great numbers. I would like to thank the whole team for an amazing experience and Allergan Canada for sponsoring this fellowship and giving me the opportunity to train at this highly specialized, internationally renowned center.