L-shaped nipple reconstruction: a novel technique to improve patient satisfaction outcomes

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Background:
Nipple reconstruction is the final stage of breast reconstruction and performed when the surgeon is confident that acceptable shape and symmetry of breast has been achieved. This study describes an innovative Nipple reconstruction, and also measures patient satisfaction of outcomes.

Aims:
The objective of this study is to describe an original technique of nipple reconstruction, developed in our Breast Unit, using a combination of random skin flap with dermal graft. This versatile and innovative L shaped nipple reconstruction is a viable alternative to traditional techniques. It is a suitable option when mastectomy scar precludes optimum nipple positioning. The dermal graft to reconstruct the areola helps create a virtually scarless nipple reconstruction.

Methods:
37 patients underwent the L-shaped nipple reconstruction and all took part in outcome satisfaction survey of this novel technique. A questionnaire using Likert Scales was developed to evaluate overall patient satisfaction with cosmetic result, perceived match to contralateral nipple, confidence in clothing and reported complications.

Surgical technique:
The long arm of the random skin flap is raised and rotated clockwise through 180 degree and apposed against the short arm of L flap creating the projecting nipple. A full thickness dermal graft is then harvested from the abdomen and is used to create the areola.

Results:
Of the thirty seven participants, 94% were either pleased or very pleased with their decision to have undergone nipple reconstruction and 93% would either strongly or very strongly recommend it to a friend.

Conclusions:
The contemporary L-shaped nipple reconstruction has positive patient satisfaction outcomes and is a very suitable alternative to traditional nipple reconstruction such as CV flap.