

3-pronged surgical approach to tackle breast cancer

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HOUSTON (FOX 26) - A team of surgeons is changing the way doctors treat breast cancer. They're working together in the operating room to make surgery much less invasive. They're pulling this off in the state-of-the-art Breast Center at Westside Surgical Hospital. Jessica Witherow is a patient there. She's an advocate for her health and has always performed monthly self breast exams. That's why she was shocked about the results of her very first mammogram.

"I was very surprised!," says Jessica Witherow. "Sometimes you just can't feel the tumor." She was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer. Witherow is relieved she underwent a 3D mammogram at Westside Surgical Hospital. Studies show 3D images can often catch cancer years before a traditional mammogram.

"My treatment options were to either have a mastectomy or lumpectomy," explains Witherow. "They said the outcome for both is equal, so I chose a lumpectomy." She was able to spare a lot of her breast tissue because of a powerful trio. Her surgical team consisted of a breast radiologist, surgical oncologist, and reconstructive plastic surgeon, who worked together side-by-side in the operating room at Westside Surgical Hospital.

"Before the surgery, I draw a map for the oncological surgeon in order to guide them through the approach that I will use for my reconstruction," says reconstructive plastic surgeon, Dr. Jay Shenaq.

"I'm the breast radiologist and my part in this team is to see the patient when she arrives for surgery," says Dr. Melissa O'Toole. She used ultrasound to help place wires around Jessica's tumor. By placing the wires with ultrasound guidance, it allows Dr. Sandra Templeton, who is known as a breast surgeon or surgical oncologist, to know exactly where to and what to remove.

"That minimizes how much I cut into the breast - or how much tissue I need to remove," says Dr. Templeton. "We allow them to get a better cosmetic look and be able to preserve their breast."

"My involvement is after the tumor is removed and perform reshaping and reconstruction of the breast, but in order to achieve the result, I review the results from the radiologist, I discuss this with members of the team," explains Dr. Shenaq.

"It's marrying two older procedures together to come up with a better cosmetic look, but still something that is oncologically sound," says Dr. Templeton.

Dr. Shenaq explains that under a traditional lumpectomy, it is not cosmetically repaired during tumor removal, then patients often undergo radiation, making it tough for plastic surgeons to repair the damage later. This new concept allows the breast to look as normal as possible with only one procedure, and Dr. Shenaq often operates on the other breast to make sure the breasts are symmetrical.

Witherow is pleased with her results. She's a teacher who was warmly welcomed back into her classroom, after recovery.

"They all screamed when they saw me and rushed and hugged me," says Witherow with a smile. She felt ready to go back to work after two weeks...but ended up taking off a month to fully recover. Insurance does cover this procedure. It's meant for fairly early stage one or two cancer. Doctors say they believe it helps the patient financially, physically, and emotionally.

For more information, visit <http://www.westsidesurgical.net/> and <https://www.facebook.com/westsidesurgical>.