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**New study supports call for increased access for breast reduction surgery to improve quality of life in symptomatic women**

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Results from a new study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* (MJA) provide a compelling argument for increased access to breast reduction surgery in Australia for women struggling with symptomatic breast hypertrophy, or enlargement, according to author, specialist plastic surgeon, Dr Nicola Dean.

Dr Dean, who also serves as vice president of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) says the study demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of breast reduction surgery for improvement in health-related Quality of Life outcomes.

“We know that breast hypertrophy causes functional impairment in women, predominantly manifesting as significant pain, and that this can be effectively ‘cured’ with breast reduction surgery.”

While there is a Medicare rebate for the procedure in the private system, access varies in the public system state to state where public hospitals have no statutory duty to follow MBS items. In some states the procedure is considered non-therapeutic and either not offered in the public system or there are lengthy waiting lists.

“This is not the case for many other procedures such as knee and hip replacements which while considered as non-urgent are not questioned in relation to functional benefit and are more available for people who need them.

“For some reason, treatment for breast hypertrophy has not been taken as seriously as a functional issue which means many women have lived from their 20s or 30s with the cumulative health impact of decades in pain, which in itself places a burden on the health system, not to mention impacting these women’s quality of life,” says Dr Dean.

“It compromises their capacity to work, to engage in sport or physical exercise or take care of their families. Overall it reduces their productivity.”

This is the first and most comprehensive study looking at the cost effectiveness of breast reduction surgery for symptomatic women in Australia.



Data was analysed from women presenting at the Flinders Medical Centre over a decade long period and it was found that the cost of the procedure and the benefit to patient was significantly lower than the cost-effective threshold upheld for other surgeries or treatments in the hospital system.

“Breast reduction is one of the most effective procedures for those who need it for improving health and quality of life and is very cost effective and so it should be more available for women who need it in Australia,” says Dr Dean.

Article can be read here; <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2021/216/3/cost-utility-analysis-breast-reduction-surgery-women-symptomatic-breast>

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