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## 34.1 Introduction

The treatment of breast cancer until the late nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century was highly mutilating for the patients, in order to have some possibility of cure [1]. The standard surgery, at that time, removed large amounts of skin and thoracic muscles [2], combined aggressive radiotherapy, and determined a significant tissue degradation. With all these sequelae due to the treatment, it was practically impossible to propose any type of technique for breast reconstruction. The evolution of our biological knowledge of the breast cancer [3, 4], in association with screening programs all around the world, provided an initial phase diagnosis [5–10] and consequently concedes a de-escalation of the mutilating treatment [11–21]. These factors contributed to preserve the patient's quality of life [22–24].

The development of a non-mutilating mastectomy, as skin-sparing mastectomy or nipple-sparing mastectomy, was the main factor to evolve indications of direct-to-implant reconstructions (DTIRs) [14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25–44]. The conservative mastectomy represents the main step on surgical technique by preserving more overall skin and surface area to place an implant and by helping to avoid some of the flattening associated with closure of skin-sparing incisions [30, 40, 41].

The implantable devices evolution was also very crucial to increase indications to DTIR. The first breast silicone implant was used in 1960, and since then, the medical industry invested massively on research and innovations, and the surgeon today has an arsenal of possibilities to use, especially prosthesis and meshes. There were improvements on several points: less capsule contracture, more resistant and durable materials, and better cosmetic results concerning the

anatomical implants with different models, shapes, and dimensions [1, 28, 39–41, 44–62].

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview about patients and implant selections in cases of DTIR, focusing in surgical planning, technical aspects, and complication management.

### 34.1.1 Indications

The technique indications are related to two main variables: breast anatomy (volume and shape) and tumor characteristics (size, local extension, and muscles or skin infiltration) [17, 19, 63–68]. Following the patient individuality, different patterns of mastectomy can be applied.

#### 34.1.1.1 Small or Medium Breasts

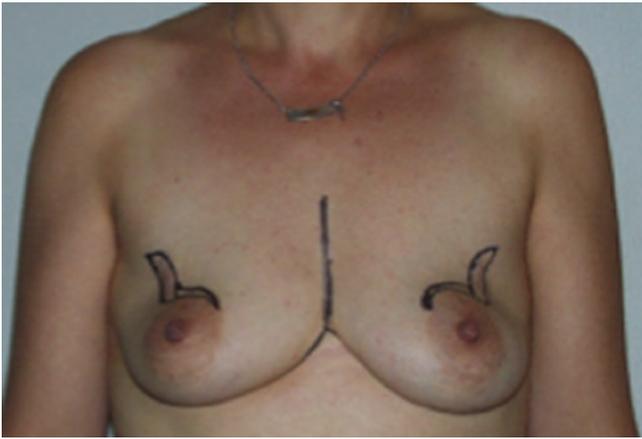
**Nipple-sparing mastectomy:** in cases of breast with minimal ptosis, small peripherally located tumors with nipple-areola complex distance >2 cm, and negative subareolar duct margins. In selected cases, larger tumors can be submitted. Contraindicated in patients with inflammatory breast cancer, clinical involvement of the nipple-areola complex, nipple retraction, Paget disease, bloody nipple discharge, or multicentricity (Fig. 34.1).

**Skin-sparing mastectomy:** in cases of tumors closer to the nipple-areola complex, positive subareolar duct margins and previous scars that compromise the nipple-areola complex blood supply. On this last situation, the nipple-areola complex graft can be performed after the intraoperative subareolar duct evaluation. Contraindicated in patients with inflammatory breast cancer and extensive skin involvement by tumor (Fig. 34.2).

#### 34.1.1.2 Large Breast

**Conventional total mastectomy:** in cases of large breast with ptosis grade III or IV and large tumors near the skin. It is possible to remove a large amount of skin over the tumor and have enough skin to perform a DTIR (Fig. 34.3).

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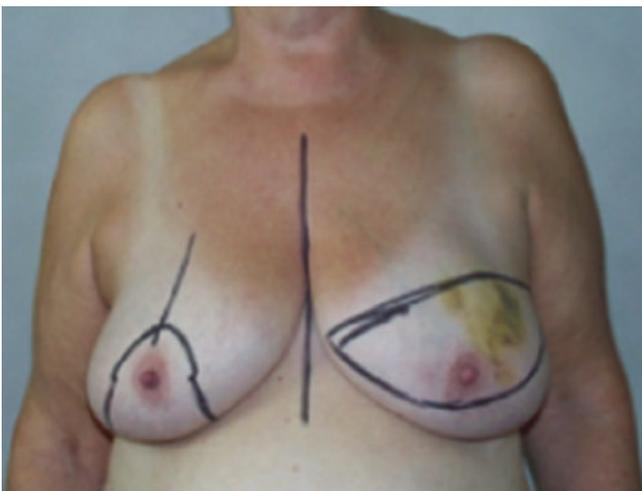
**Fig. 34.1** Preoperative drawings for nipple-sparing mastectomy removing the previous biopsy scars



**Fig. 34.4** Preoperative drawings for a left skin-reducing mastectomy with a modified “Wise pattern”



**Fig. 34.2** Preoperative drawings for skin-sparing mastectomy removing small amount of skin



**Fig. 34.3** Preoperative drawings for total mastectomy removing large amount of skin over the tumor located in the upper outer quadrant

Wise pattern mastectomy: in cases of large breast with ptosis grade up to II (moderate). It is possible to remove an amount of skin in order to have an adequate skin envelope to cover the implant. Contraindicated in patients with inflammatory breast cancer and extensive skin involvement by tumor (Fig. 34.4).

Skin-reducing mastectomy: in cases of large breast with ptosis grade III or IV (advanced or severe, respectively). It is possible to reduce the amount of the skin envelope with a lower pole skin deepithelialization and use the dermis to help the implant cover. Contraindicated in patients with inflammatory breast cancer and extensive skin involvement by tumor (Fig. 34.4).

### 34.1.1.3 Relative Contraindications

Advanced disease (stage III or higher)  
Need for postmastectomy radiotherapy  
Significant medical comorbidities such as active smoking, obesity, or cardiopulmonary disease

### 34.1.2 Planning

Optimal management requires a multidisciplinary approach between oncologic and reconstructive surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, medical oncologists, nurses, and physiotherapists. This allows providers to coordinate cancer and reconstructive procedures with postoperative recovery and adjuvant treatment. Also, the oncological multimodality access has been associated with a reduction in breast cancer

mortality [69]. A caring relationship is crucial to patient satisfaction with the reconstructive process and must be established early [70]. Therefore, it is important to embrace the patient with all endearment since the first interview. In-hospital is highly recommended to examine the patient the day before the operation and explain again the complete surgical procedure in order to have the patient's consensus.

### 34.1.2.1 Preoperative Evaluation

History and physical assessment should focus on the following factors: stage disease, oncologic treatment plan, past surgical history, comorbidities, volume and shape of contralateral breast, body habitus, smoking story, and potential donor sites for autologous reconstruction.

A past medical history of radiotherapy on the same site or current disease extent for which radiotherapy is mandatory influences reconstructive options. Radiotherapy leads to fibrosis, which compromises the quality of the skin and underlying tissue, resulting in a higher incidence of complications from the reconstructive procedure, and may produce a less esthetically pleasing result [28–31, 59, 71–80].

Comorbidities such as obesity [31, 53, 59, 76, 81, 82], insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus [53, 76, 82], chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, smoking [31, 53, 59, 76, 81–83], and connective tissue disease may impact also the patient's reconstructive options. When poorly controlled, these comorbidities may increase the risk for complications such as impaired wound healing, reduced tissue perfusion, and infection [76, 84]. In addition, past surgical history of coronary artery bypass grafting (with use of internal mammary vessels) may limit reconstructive choices because of their adverse effects on the breast tissue blood supply.

Tobacco use also poses significant risks [31, 53, 59, 76, 81–83]. Due to the nicotine effect, as well as generalized tissue hypoxia as a result of carbon monoxide, this can increase the risks of tissue necrosis, delayed healing, and infection [85, 86]. For these reasons, avoidance of smoking is recommended for at least 4 weeks prior to surgery and 2 weeks following surgery.

The physical examination of the breasts includes an evaluation for volume, ptosis, asymmetry, scars, and the axilla examined for palpably abnormal lymph nodes. The abdomen and back are evaluated, taking note of scars and patient's personal distribution of excess skin and fat. Technical details such as the type of incisions following the oncological and plastic goals and the need of a contralateral breast correction are also determined at this moment. The patient's wishes regarding scar location, tissue sacrifice, postoperative recovery, and esthetic outcome are also important in guiding the reconstructive surgeon. Finally, the evaluation of bilateral mammograms, bilateral breast and axilla ultrasound, and,

in specific cases, breast magnetic resonance is also indispensable.

Photographs of the patient standing and preoperative drawings are performed after admission at the hospital. During the preoperative drawings, it is important to do specific breast measurements as base width and height, projection, and pinch test (to evaluate the skin and subcutaneous thickness). With all these parameters, it is possible to calculate the range of models and implant size to be used.

### 34.1.2.2 Intraoperative Evaluation

The initial evaluation consists of verifying the skin and muscles integrity, soft tissue blood supply, and inframammary fold preservation. The implant is chosen using preoperative measurements, mastectomy weight, and contralateral breast modifications (reduction or breast augmentation). The use of sterile sizers is helpful to select the best implant aiming good symmetry.

The advent of real-time perfusion mapping and similar technologies represents an important aid for intraoperative planning. Some models predicting the risk for mastectomy flap necrosis have surfaced [87]. Although simple in concept, the surgeon's intraoperative judgment may be one of the more challenging aspects of DTIR and should be a focus of the perioperative decision-making process [29, 31, 88–90]. The unpredictable nature of the defect after oncologic resection is a particularly limiting factor, as implant size depends on the available soft tissue envelope.

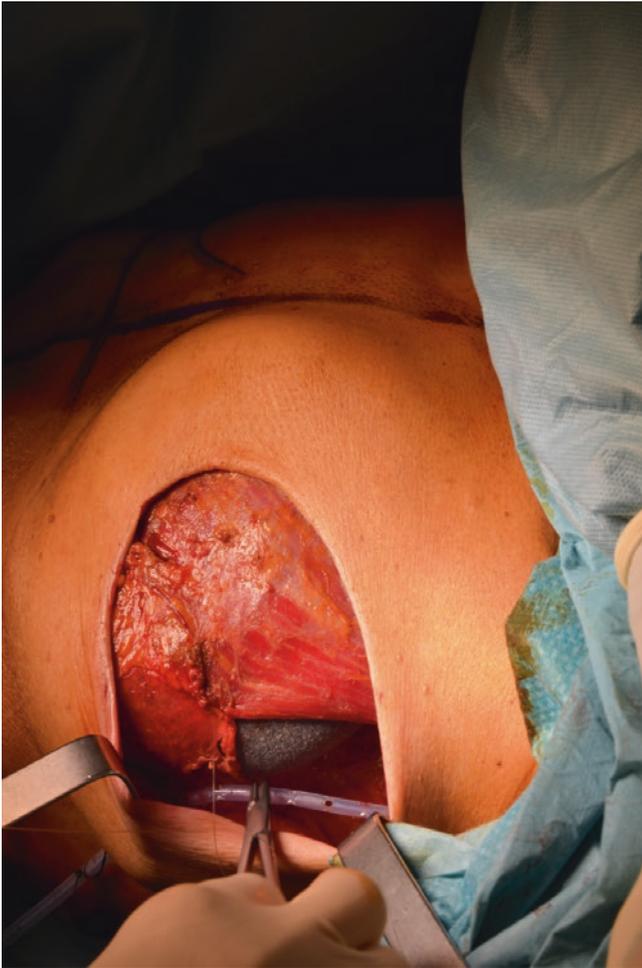
In cases of soft tissue commitment and impossibility to perform the programmed surgery, the surgeon can convert it into a two-step reconstruction, using a tissue expander. In these cases, it is not recommended to perform the contralateral breast symmetry. A new evaluation will be done at the end of the expander inflation, and the surgery must be integrated with the timing of oncological treatment.

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## 34.2 Implant Pockets

Until some years ago, I did not recommend the insertion of definitive prosthesis in the same location of the removed breast. The complication rates are very high, and if, unluckily, a small skin necrosis arrives or a scar dehiscence emerges, an exposure of the implant can occur, and the implant removal is necessary. Even if there are no postoperative complications, the normal healing around the implant with the capsule formation gives a very bad cosmetic results, with an aspect of "ball attach to the thorax" with an unpleasant aspect.

Nowadays, different possibilities of implant pockets are available, due to the new materials evolution [43, 91].



**Fig. 34.5** Complete muscular pocket with pectoralis major muscle and serratus muscle

### 34.2.1 Total Muscular Pocket (Pectoralis Major and Serratus)

It was the first technique used in the past, when the mastectomy was less conservative. With this technique it was possible to cover completely the implant and avoid implant exposition in cases of skin necrosis. The cosmetic results were quite good when using small and round-shaped implants, but in cases of medium or large anatomical implants, it is difficult to cover completely the implant, and the cosmetic results are inferior because the lateral breast shape is compressed by the serratus muscle (Fig. 34.5).

### 34.2.2 Partial Muscular Pocket (Pectoralis Major)

This technique can be applied with safety in cases with a good lateral skin flap and when is possible to put all the mastectomy scar over the pectoralis major muscle, that one may have a



**Fig. 34.6** Partial muscular pocket with only the pectoralis major muscle

good protection in cases of small skin necrosis or dehiscence. It is a very simple and quick technique and allows good results with anatomical or round implants. If the serratus muscle fascia is preserved during the mastectomy, it is also helpful to use it to cover partially the implant and avoid implant displacement, since it is the path of least resistance (Fig. 34.6).

### 34.2.3 Pectoralis Major Muscle and Synthetic Meshes

It is normally used in the outer lower portion of the breast, fixed to the lateral margin of the pectoralis major muscle and in the inframammary fold. The main indication of this material is mechanic, to maintain the implant at position and reduce the pectoralis major muscle retraction. The major problem with this material is the increase incidence of post-operative complications. The synthetic mesh is a low-cost alternative to biological matrices [35, 36, 39, 52, 57].

### 34.2.4 Pectoralis Major Muscle and Biological Meshes

The biological mesh is a collagen tissue matrix from which cell debris, DNA, and RNA are removed by complex proprietary process, leaving behind an acellular matrix [92]. This immunologically inert biological implant serves as scaffold necessary for tissue ingrowth, angiogenesis, and regeneration and can be integrated completely in few weeks. It is normally used in the outer lower portion of the breast, fixed to the lateral margin of the pectoralis major muscle and “wrapped” over the implant, not fixed to the inframammary fold. The major goal is to create a new tissue surface to cover the implant and reinforce the thickness in the outer lower portion of the breast [34, 53, 55, 61, 93, 94]. The material is



**Fig. 34.7** Mixed pocket with pectoralis major muscle and ADM in lower outer quadrant

still very expensive [95, 96], and in our institute, the main indications are in cases with previous radiotherapy or complete inferior detachment of the pectoralis major muscle and rectus abdominis fascia. Using these material in these indications, it is possible to avoid a muscular flap, and it is also possible to reduce the capsule contracture after an implant breast reconstruction in cases with previous radiotherapy [55, 59, 61, 62, 97, 98] (Fig. 34.7).

A recent meta-analysis demonstrated that the risk of implant loss was not significantly affected by whether or not ADM was used. This result may be surprising given that the risk of infection, seroma, and mastectomy flap necrosis were significantly elevated in the ADM cohort. Although the use of ADM raises the risk of other complications including infection, they may not be that serious and can be clinically controlled without causing the implant removal [61].

### 34.2.5 Only Biological Mesh

Recent developments of this new technique showed that it is possible to do a breast reconstruction with implant with-



**Fig. 34.8** Braxton® device consists in an ADM pocket with the implant inside, and it will be positioned in the subcutaneous space

out any muscle. The implant is completely covered with the biological mesh and implanted in the subcutaneous space. The cost is still very expensive and remains the main problem with this kind of technique [99, 100] (Fig. 34.8).

## 34.3 Contralateral Breast Management

The goal of DTIR is an immediate reconstruction with definitive implant avoiding a second operation [1, 40]. For this reason, a contralateral breast mastopexy is necessary in order to get an optimal symmetry [101–104] (Figs. 34.9, 34.10, 34.11, and 34.12). There are four main options for the contralateral breast.

### 34.3.1 Mastopexy

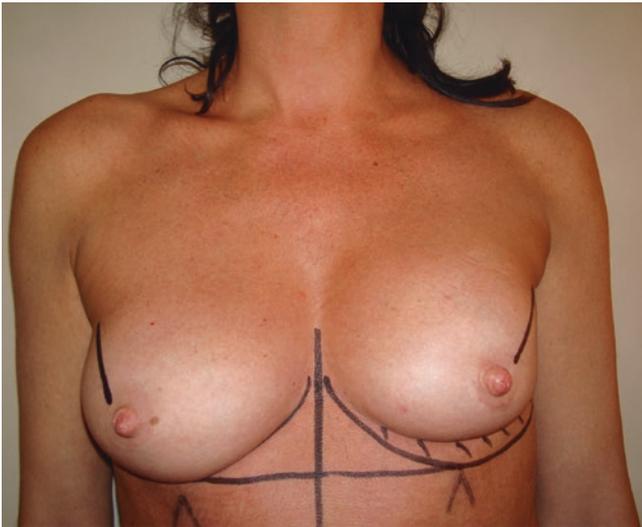
The DTIR allows a reconstructed breast without ptosis; for this reason, the contralateral ptosis should be corrected in order to get a good symmetry. Several techniques are available depending on the ptosis degree.

### 34.3.2 Reduction Mammoplasty

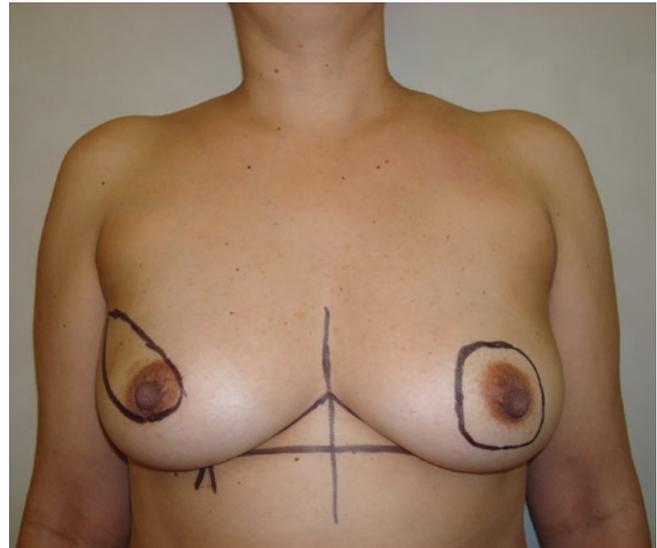
The DTIR is limited for the size of the breast to be reconstructed, because the maximum breast implant size available is around 700 cc. For this reason, in cases of large contralateral breast, a reduction mammoplasty should be performed in order to get a good symmetry. Several techniques are available depending on the breast shape, dimension, and ptotic degree.

### 34.3.3 Breast Augmentation

This technique is proposed for patients with small breasts and desiring a breast augmentation. The implant used is



**Fig. 34.9** Preoperative drawings for a bilateral nipple-sparing mastectomy with a radial incision and a DTIR



**Fig. 34.11** Preoperative drawings for a right total mastectomy and DTIR and left periareolar mastopexy.



**Fig. 34.10** Final results after 6 months

frequently as a round-shaped implant positioned under the glandular tissue or under the pectoralis major muscle (dual plane technique).

### 34.3.4 Prophylactic Contralateral Mastectomy

This technique increased the indications in the last years after the possibility to diagnose a breast cancer familiarity



**Fig. 34.12** Final results after 12 months.

with BRCA 1 and 2 genetic test [105]. Using the same technique and the same implant size and shape in both breasts, the breast symmetry is frequently optimal [106].

## 34.4 Technical Aspects

### 34.4.1 Cleaning and Arm Reposition

Once the mastectomy is finished, the skin is cleaned once again with chlorhexidine [107], and new sterile drapes are placed on top of the original ones. The arms are positioned along the body on arm boards, in order to promote a pectoralis major relaxation.

### 34.4.2 Skin and Muscle Evaluation After Mastectomy

The two main points are the coverage capacity, allowing the junction of tissue flaps without excessive tension on the suture, and the vascular supply of the mastectomy flaps that is evaluated by soft tissue thickness, color, and bleeding.

### 34.4.3 Pocket Dissection

The pectoralis muscle is elevated with a light retractor from lateral to medial; the lower muscle attachment is released with electrocautery from approximately 4–8 o'clock, preserving the rectus abdominis fascia, which is essential to have a complete pocket. The inferior dissection is performed until the inframammary fold level. The lower outer pocket dissection depends on the technical choice; the implant can be positioned subcutaneously, under the serratus fascia or under the serratus muscle.

### 34.4.4 Cleaning and Draining

The skin is cleaned once again with chlorhexidine, and internal pocket is irrigated with povidone solution [108]. One or two drains are inserted: one drain is in the submuscular pocket and, in cases of axillar lymphadenectomy, a second drain is placed in the subcutaneous space and axilla.

### 34.4.5 Implant Insertion

The operative team is also structured, so that there are no changes of surgical scrub technicians once the implant is opened until it is inserted in the breast pocket. The gloves are changed; only one surgeon handles the prosthesis and the implant is placed. The pocket is closed using monocryl 3.0 sutures.

### 34.4.6 Skin Closure and Dressings

The skin edges are trimmed and the skin is closed in layers with monocryl 3.0 and 4.0. Drains must be open at this time, to control the surgical site. Then Steri-Strips are positioned over suture site, and sterile gauze dressing is placed around the drains.

### 34.4.7 Post-op Cares

The patient stays in the hospital one or two nights. A sportif bra is placed prior to discharge from the hospital, after the

prime dressing is pulled off, to help support the implant(s). Upon discharge, the drains, which are covered with and occlusive dressings, are maintained for 7–14 days, with removal determined by the amount and quality of their output, which should be less than 40 cc in 24 h.

### 34.4.8 Nipple and Areola Reconstruction

In cases of DTIR that the NAC was not preserved, the option of nipple-areolar reconstruction is proposed to the patients after 4 months. There are multiple techniques by which a nipple and areola can be recreated. Surgical methods involve local tissue rearrangement procedures or skin grafts [109]. These techniques are executed on day hospital, considering that it requires only local anesthesia. Once the projecting papilla has been created, the appearance of the entire nipple-areola complex can be enhanced by the use of tattooing. An alternative to surgical reconstruction of a nipple is three-dimensional tattoo. This is usually performed in a nonmedical setting by an experienced tattoo artist. The results have been excellent and patient satisfaction has been high.

## 34.5 Complication Management

### 34.5.1 Hematomas

It occurs usually in 1–5% [28, 29, 31, 55, 110] of the patients within 1–3 days after surgery. The symptoms are swelling of the breast and increasing pain that, sometimes, does not respond to pain reliefs. If the amount of blood is small, no treatment is required if the drains are still in place, but if the collection is moderate or large, a surgical revision is necessary to remove the coagulated blood, clean the cavity e insert new drains.

### 34.5.2 Skin Necrosis

The risk of skin necrosis is higher in DTIR compared with tissue expander reconstruction [37, 110, 111]. It occurs around 1.25–26% [28, 31, 55, 112]. Conservative wound care and a second intention healing can be used if the implant is completely covered by the muscles [82, 112]. In cases of skin necrosis with partial muscular pocket, the risk of implant exposure and an implant removal is very high. In these cases, the skin edge necrosis can often be managed with debridement and closure under local anesthesia. If the necrosis is more severe, the implant may need to be downsized or changed to a tissue expander [76, 83].

### 34.5.3 Seroma

#### 34.5.3.1 Immediate

In the days following the surgery, fluid can collect around the implant, causing pain or swelling, if it is not adequately drained or if the drains are removed before the body can reabsorb the lymphatic fluid. It occurs in 1.5–7.5% of the cases [29, 31, 55, 56]. Removal of larger seromas is recommended since they can become infected. Usually, the fluid can be removed carefully with a puncture guided by an ultrasound and does not require additional surgery [56, 76].

#### 34.5.3.2 Delayed

The etiology remains unclear; one supposed cause can be due to an internal tissue irritation with the textured implant surface in cases of an intense physical effort. Another possibility is a focal infection outside of the breast (oral, urinary, etc.) that can stimulate a fluid production around the implant. In cases of small seromas, only an oral therapy with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory for 10 days can solve the problem. Otherwise, in cases of large seromas, it is also necessary to aspirate the liquid to do bacterial analyses (antibiogram) and also cytology, for eventual diagnosis of anaplastic large cell lymphoma (ALCL) [113, 114]. In cases of frequent seroma recurrences, it is necessary to do an implant revision with large capsulectomy and implant change.

### 34.5.4 Infections

In cases of DTIR, it is around 1–5.2% of the cases [28, 29, 55, 115], and the most common organisms are *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Staphylococcus epidermidis* [115–117]. The main symptoms include pain, cellulitis, swelling, and fever. Initially, the treatment is based on oral antibiotics or, if the infection is severe, on intravenous antibiotics until the clinical and laboratory exams maintain stable for 48–72 h; then recommendation is return to oral antibiotics for 1–2 weeks more [76]. In severe cases, antibiogram is strongly suggested to guide the treatment. The presence of gram-negative rods or methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* is relative contraindication to salvage attempts based on the poor success rate. The risk factors associated with postoperative infections after IBR are chemotherapy, smoking, radiation therapy, intraoperative lymph node dissection, and larger breast size [116]. In cases of severe infections, without positive response with antibiotics, the implant removal is indicated, clean and drain the breast, and reevaluate the local conditions after 4 months, in order to plan another breast reconstruction [76].

### 34.5.5 Implant Exposition

The implant exposition can be observed after skin necrosis or wound dehiscence. It occurs around 2% [28]. The decision to try to conserve the implant depends on the time between the exposition and medical evaluation (more time = more possibility of implant contamination) and the skin quality and elasticity or previous radiotherapy. A case with good local conditions and short time of exposition is indicated to make a debridement, new suture under local anesthesia, and antibiotic therapy. In the contrary, in cases with bad local conditions or previous radiotherapy and large time of exposition, the best solution is the implant removal and reevaluation after 4 months for a new technique of breast reconstruction.

### 34.5.6 Implant Rotation

The main problem is due to a poor adhesion between the implant and the capsule, and the reasons can be thin capsula, periprosthetic fluids, or double capsulae. It occurs around 0.9% [55]. An implant surgical revision is indicated with a large capsulectomy to create a new adhesion area; try to close dead spaces and also consider to change the anatomical implant with a round-shaped implant.

### 34.5.7 Capsular Contracture

This is the main long-term problem after implant surgery, and the rates are very different in the literature [28, 29, 55, 56]. The characteristics are pain, hardness, and changes on breast shape. The classification of Baker is useful to guide the treatment on this situation, and usually capsulotomy associated with implant replacement is reserved for Baker III/IV. A number of factors may reduce the occurrence of capsular contracture. These include submuscular implant location, use of textured implants, and prevention of postoperative infection or bleeding. Radiotherapy is closely connected with capsular contracture, because of its effects over the soft tissue [28–31, 53, 56, 71–75, 77–80].

### 34.5.8 Implant Rupture

The recent implant rupture is not detected by clinical examinations; for this reason, our follow-up protocol for patients with implant is a bilateral breast ultrasound each year and a breast MRI at 10–15 and 20 years of implantation [118–120]. In cases of implant rupture, an implant surgical revision with capsulectomy is indicated; remove the implant and all silicone inside the capsula and change the implant. In cases of axillar lymph nodes augmented after implant rupture, lymph

node removal is indicated only in cases presenting a very large and painful nodes. The others lymph nodes slightly augmented can be followed, and it will become normal few months after the implant change.

### Conclusions

There are a number of potential advantages to single-stage DTIR as opposed to a conventional two-stage implant reconstruction. One benefit is avoiding a second operation and the expansion period necessary for tissue expander/implant reconstruction, allowing a shorter time to final reconstruction [28, 30, 37, 40, 110]. It improves patient quality of life and reduces the inconvenience of frequent clinical visits [28, 30, 37, 40, 110, 121]. The direct-to-implant procedure may have a higher risk of postoperative comorbidities and failure compared with two-stage reconstruction, so patient selection is an essential issue combined with a good surgical team experience [28, 29, 37, 40, 41, 55, 58, 60, 76, 81, 110, 122–125].

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