

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Questions regarding pain and long-term sequelae were answered at breast level as follows with reference to the past month.

Question (Q): Have you felt pain in the area where you were operated? Answer (A): Dichotomized so “yes” = pain few days a month, pain a few days a week, pain almost every day, pain several times a day, pain all the time, “no” = no pain.

Q: Do you feel burdened by sensory disturbances in the area where you were operated? A: Dichotomized so “no” = no sensory disturbance, “yes” = minimal, a little, somewhat, much, very much.

Q: Have you felt pain in the arm or shoulder on the operated side? A: Dichotomized so “yes” = pain few days a month, pain a few days a week, pain almost every day, pain several times a day, pain all the time, “no” = no pain.

Q: Do you feel burdened by sensory disturbances in the arm or shoulder on the operated side? A: Dichotomized so “no” = no sensory disturbance, “yes” = minimal, a little, somewhat, much, very much.

Q: Do you suffer from lymphedema in the arm or hand on the operated side? A: “yes” = much edema, some edema, only edema occasionally, “no” = no edema.

Q: Are you able to use the arm on the operated side as before surgery? A: Dichotomized so “yes” = yes, “no” = partly, no.

Questions answered at patient level were as follows.

Q: Have you felt pain anywhere else in the body (apart from the breast, arm or shoulder on the reconstructed side)? A: Dichotomized so “yes” = pain few days a month, pain a few days a week, pain almost every day, pain several times a day, pain all the time, “no” = no pain.

Q: Have you been taking painkillers within the past month? A: yes/no.

Q: How is your current overall health status? A: Dichotomized so “good” = excellent, very good, good, “bad” = less well, bad.

Q: How is your current overall health status compared to the time of BR? A: Dichotomized so “improved” = much better, slightly better, “unchanged/worse” = unchanged, slightly worse, much worse.

Health related limitations of activities—Q: Are you, due to your health, limited in the following activities? If so, how much? The item consists of 10 questions, each with three options for answering (A: not at all, little, very). The 10 questions represented a scale of how physically demanding activities were [(I) demanding activities, (II) easy activities, (III) to lift or carry groceries, (IV) walking several floors upstairs, (V) walking up a staircase, (VI) to bend or kneel, (VII) walk more than 1 kilometer, (VIII) walk a few hundred meters, (IX) walk 100 meters, (X) take a bath or put on clothes). Primarily it was assumed, that patients would be able to perform the activities from j. and up to a certain threshold on the scale. But review of data revealed, that some patients were able to perform some of the activities more challenging than after the first observed threshold on the scale from (X) to (I). This observation led to the decision of analyzing the number of activities the patient can do without any limitations. Answers were dichotomized so “1 = no limitations” (A: not at all) and “0 = limited to some degree” (A: little/very). Patients obtained a sum score, range 0–10, with higher scores representing more activities the patient can perform without any health-related limitations.

Q: With your current experience, would you recommend others to undergo BR? A: Dichotomized so “yes” = yes, possibly, “no” = no, don’t know.

Q: How would you describe your current QoL compared to the time before your BR? A: Dichotomized so “improved” = much better, slightly better, “unchanged/worse” = unchanged, slightly worse, much worse).

Q: Was BR the right choice for you? A: Dichotomized so “yes” = absolutely, partly, “no” = not really, not at all.

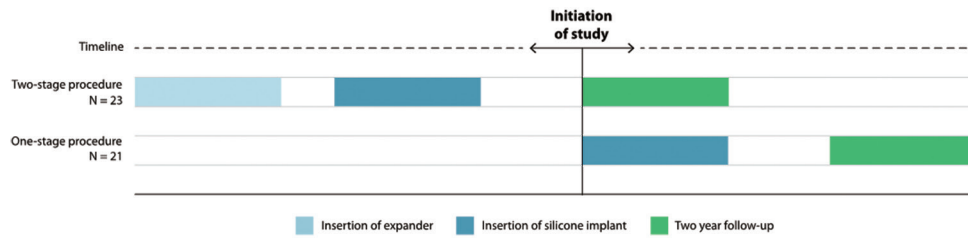


Figure S1 Timeline of study recruitment.