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Fleur-de-lys abdominal body contouring surgery following massive weight loss.

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We read with great interest the manuscript entitled “Safety of fleur-de-lys abdominoplasty after massive weight loss” by DeSerres *et al.*¹ We would like to congratulate the authors on their work on the abdominal sequelae of massive weight loss (MWL) patients exhibiting excess tissue and skin laxity in both the transverse and vertical dimensions. Unlike the fleur-de-lys (FDL) procedure, traditional abdominoplasty does not correct deformities that extend to both axes, as highlighted by the authors. We would like to discuss certain points that the authors raise, based on our experience and previous research. These may aid future studies.

First, in MWL patients, skin laxity and tissue excess are indeed evident in both the transverse and vertical abdominal axes, but these are also circular in nature. Thus, a circumferential reconstruction is usually necessary; lower bodylift procedures may be more appropriate than abdominoplasty.

Many studies have described the risk factors for complications after abdominoplasty. However, the complication rates of conventional and FDL abdominoplasty have not been compared; nor have those of the abdominoplasty and bodylift that are often offered to patients in need. We are not convinced that such interventions (i.e., FDL abdominoplasty/bodylift) increase the risk for major complications compared to traditional abdominoplasty. However, we observe that plastic surgeons remain reluctant to offer these longer interventions that are in fact better suited to correction of the deformities observed after MWL.

Second, between April 2018 and February 2021, we performed 11 FDL abdominoplasties and 21 FDL bodylifts (Table 1), as chosen by the patients, of whom 93% were female of mean age 46.8 years. The mean initial BMI was 30.4 kg/m² and the mean change in BMI was 18.1 kg/m². The overall complication rate was 28%, broadly similar to that of the authors. We recorded one major complication (an infection) in the abdominoplasty group and eight minor complications (wound dehiscence) in the bodylift group. We found it notable that the two groups did not differ significantly in terms of preoperative data (overall $p = 0.416$; Table 2), particularly the BMI (29.5 vs. 30.8 kg/m²; $p = 0.115$). Older patients tended to choose the simpler and faster procedure; the abdominoplasty group was somewhat older than the bodylift group (50.5 vs. 44.9 years, $p = 0.258$), although statistical significance was not attained.

As also found by the authors, most complications were small dehiscences. However, we encountered no vertical and no “T-junction” dehiscence. This may reflect our surgical technique; we preoperatively mark the T-junction 2 cm under the umbilicus. In our opinion, this greatly reduces skin tension at the end of the procedure, and thus wound dehiscence.

Third, the authors found that the incidence of minor complications increased as more concurrent procedures were performed. This is in line with the findings of a recent review that compared abdominoplasty alone to both abdominoplasty and breast surgery; the complication rate was higher in the latter group.² The valuable prospective study of Winocour,³ found that combined procedures increased the complication risk in multivariate analyses (relative risk = 1.5).

In conclusion, we fully agree with the authors: FDL abdominoplasty is feasible and safe. Complications are not uncommon after abdominal, MWL, body-contouring reconstruction, but most are minor, easily managed in outpatient settings, and do not compromise either patient satisfaction or the quality of life. We thank the authors for their contribution to post-bariatric surgery reconstruction, and for improving our knowledge of factors predictive of postoperative complications. We believe that plastic surgeons must make greater efforts to help the complex subpopulation that requires reconstruction.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

All clinical investigations adhered to all relevant tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki and were approved by our Committee for the Protection of Persons (CPP).

DISCLOSURE

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Table 1. Characteristics of the 32 patients

Variable	Value	Range (min, max)
Age, yr	46.8	(24, 6)
Female sex, n (%)	30 (63%)	-
Abdominoplasty, n (%)	11 (34%)	-
Bodylift, n (%)	21 (66%)	-
Weight before MWL, kg	130.3	(78, 199)
Weight before surgery, kg	81.6	(57, 116)
Weight loss, kg	48.4	(0, 101)
Percentage of weight loss (%)	35%	(0%, 53%)
Pre-MWL BMI, kg/m ²	48.4	(26.7, 75.8)
Pre-surgical BMI, kg/m ²	30.4	(21.5, 43.8)
ASA Score, n (%)		
	1 3 (10%)	-
	2 26 (81%)	-
	3 3 (10%)	-
Operative time, min	159.7	(76, 29)
History of bariatric surgery, n (%)	29 (90%)	-
Complications, n (%)	9 (28%)	-

Table 2. Statistical analysis

	FDL abdominoplasty	FDL bodylift	p
n	11	21	
Age (mean±SD)	50.5±11	44.9±11.5	0.258*
BMI (mean±SD)	29.5±2.9	30.8±5.8	0.416*
Complications (n ; %)	1 (9%)	8 (38%)	0.115**

* Non parametric Mann-Whitney test

** Fisher's exact test