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Breast-conserving surgery avoided by many doctors

Reuters Health reported on November 28, 2000 that many doctors are avoiding the use of the less radical lumpectomy in favor of the more radical and disfiguring mastectomy.

Dr. Lillian Rinker of Methodist Healthcare-Central Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee presented a study involving 142 women with early-stage breast cancer to the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) in Chicago, Illinois.

All of the women in the study were eligible for lumpectomy, a procedure where only the tumor is removed, leaving most of the healthy breast tissue intact.

According to Rinker, "only 47% of them had lumpectomy. The rest were treated with mastectomy," where the tumor and most of the breast is removed.

The big determining factor? Rinker says that doctors who attend regular meetings where "oncologists, radiation oncologists and surgeons share views and discuss treatment were more likely to perform lumpectomies."

"Surgeons who were reluctant to perform breast conserving surgery were unlikely to attend the conferences."

By way of commentary, there's another question to add to your list of things to ask all of your doctors: How many seminars or conferences do you attend each year in your specialty? ..

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