



Surgical Summary

From the 2017 Canadian National Lymphedema Conference

Dr. Alex Munnoch addresses questions regarding surgery approaches



Ideally, surgeons need to be working in partnership as a multidisciplinary team. Its no good having a surgeon do the surgery and sending the patient back without any

information as to what his management should be, what to do with their garments, etc. So many surgeons do the surgery, send them off to a therapist, then see the patient once and never see them again. How can we really expect this to be successful? It's much better working in tandem, selecting the appropriate patients and then collecting outcomes and monitoring the patients more long term.

There are some surgeons who are well known and well respected within the lymphedema community. They get good results with their surgery techniques and are eager to share and publish their

findings. However in almost every USA city now, there is a plastic surgeon offering some form of lymphedema surgery. Yet, they never attend any of the national or international lymphedema conferences, they are not presenting results, and therefore you have to question what is actually going on, because they're not being judged by their peers.

In reconstructive techniques, don't believe surgeons who say "you're going to get 100% reduction," because that doesn't happen. At best, you might get a 50 - 80% reduction, at worst, if you've got no edema left in your leg and it's all fatty and you get the reconstructive technique,

your leg might stay the same, and you might get away with wearing a lighter compression garment, or no compression garment, and you'll have reduced instances of cellulitis. But if limb bulk is your main issue, it will remain the same. This is the same with the liposuction techniques.

Ask what the post-op care requirements are and what therapy do they expect them to treat their patient.

We're not trying to cure the lymphedema, we're just trying to reduce the bulk.

It is important to find a surgeon who is not only able to get good results, but is able to provide the post-operative care and over all management in order to get the results that are desired.

Patient compliance is another important aspect.

There's no point in doing surgery if the patient is not going to work with the surgeon and therapist together.

Therapists need to provide feedback regarding their patients back to the surgeons and encourage them to be part of the surgical team.

Ask what the post-op care requirements are and what therapy do they expect them to treat their patient.

Do your research on surgeons.

Look at the surgeons, look at the results they're publishing, speak with a therapist. Find out if that surgeon is working with a team, what is their post-operative regime, because that is vital if you're going to get the results you're expecting. [LP](#)



Dr. Alex Munnoch FRCS Ed (Plast) is a consultant plastic surgeon at Ninewells Hospital (Dundee, Scotland) providing surgical treatments for lymphedema patients for the past 13 years. He has presented his results at numerous national & international conferences and most recently at the Canadian National Lymphedema Conference Fall 2017. He is currently a member of the executive committee of the International Society of Lymphology.