

Traveling for Plastic Surgery The Hurwitz Center Way

by Ronda Einbinder

It is not your grandmother's world anymore. The days of visiting the local doctor down the street, more for his address than his credentials, have passed. With the electronic age came the ability to research online to locate the most qualified physician for what we need, and sometimes the best doctor for us is not the one up the street. As people begin traveling to meet their medical needs, issues arise that patients need to think about that would not be problems if they were at home. The ability to find creative solutions for out-of-town patients has become one of the new marks of excellent service.

The surgeons at the Hurwitz Center for Plastic Surgery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, provide everything the patient and the family need to allow for a comfortable stay while receiving the best medical care. "We provide service for the patients beginning as pre-ops," explained Michelle Dychko, Patient Advocate for the Hurwitz Center for Plastic Surgery. "We pick them up from the airport in a limousine and take them to the hotel that we work the most closely with here in Pittsburgh. We work extensively with the hotel to get special rates for our patients. We also make sure the patient gets everything they need: benches in the shower; larger refrigerators, handicapped facilities. We also provide microwaves and blenders so they can blend their nutritional supplements."

It is a team effort that allows the patient to feel well cared for while away from home. "We provide a coordinator that makes sure everything the patient needs she has," said plastic surgeon Dennis Hurwitz. "It is just a hotel and sometimes things slip through the cracks. We don't know if the right food is by the bedside, but the coordinator has become an essential part of this kind of service."

On the day of surgery, the coordinator arranges transportation to the hospital. "I check up on them at the hospital," said Dychko. "I make sure the nurse knows how to deal with the patient because they often need orientation on how to deal with a cosmetic surgery patient. I make sure they have the proper medications and that they are comfortable. I also make sure the shuttle is on time and that they are not sitting in the lobby. The aftercare and recovery is vital to the healing process, so I make sure they are not drinking sweet drinks but pure water. I also will buy them what they need while they are here and then they reimburse us."

"There is always going to be swelling after surgery," said Dr. Hurwitz. "We do a total body lift surgery. No matter how good we are, our patients will still have post-operative swelling. We make a lot of effort to avoid this. We have special foam mattress beds and we call in a Lymphedema specialist when needed."

After the initial electronic contact with the center, patients are asked to meet with the surgeons in person before a surgery date is discussed. "We try to anticipate what the patient needs while they are pre-ops," explained plastic surgeon Siamak Agha, who joined the center two years ago. "We talk to patients at great length regarding the procedure they are having. Each weight loss surgery procedure is different, so we need to know what their nutritional deficiencies might be. We need to understand this so we can better assist them with the healing process."

The reputation of the Hurwitz Center for Plastic Surgery brings people from around the world to Pittsburgh. "They come to me because they have seen the results we have

shown in body contouring surgery,” said Dr. Hurwitz, the innovator of the Total Body Lift procedure. Dr. Hurwitz, along with Dr. Agha, has written extensively in scientific journals and has appeared on numerous television shows.

The post-op appointments are also arranged so that the patients can visit with the surgeon closer to their homes. “Dr. Agha and I travel around the country giving lectures very frequently and we avail ourselves when we are out of town to see our patients,” said Dr. Hurwitz. “I am seeing a patient next week in Berlin that I already operated on. I will see patients anywhere in the world.”

The world is shrinking for Dr. Hurwitz, who will be opening a practice in Beverly Hills, California, providing the same coordinated travel arrangements for patients interested in surgery on the west coast. “We encourage patients to keep in touch via email,” said Dr. Hurwitz. “We set aside designated office time to respond to emails. I stop my hours and then my hours for out of town patients begin. They can also send us photos to show us how they are looking. We avail ourselves of the electronic world to keep it small.”

To find out more about the Hurwitz Center for Plastic Surgery, please visit www.Hurwitzcenter.com.