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## Shifting the Basic Pattern Block into a New Framework to Fit the Demands of Post Double Mastectomy Women: Part 2

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### Introduction

In several studies, clothing is described as not only covering the body, but also as a comprehensive term to include body modifications and supplements. It can generate social approval and psychological satisfaction (Chowdhary U., 2008). Jackson (2004) noted that, “Clothing is a silent communicator and an outward symbol that expresses meaning and gives others information about us. The appearance or outer image that develops through this expression of meaning is an interpretation of the psychological components of who we are.” It plays a major role in appearance and social construction of identity.

In a study by Feather, Kaiser & Rucker (1989), most post mastectomy women consider appearance to be significant for both social events and informal situations. However, “changes due to treatment for breast cancer cause alteration in human system processes and therefore may change the process used to evaluate clothing. Physical comfort issues may increase as clothes interact differently with a changed body. Psychological and social comfort may be affected when a woman has an altered outer image, as well as an altered internal feeling about her body” (Jackson, 2004). Furthermore, a mastectomy robs women of versatility of clothing and dressing. It takes away their freedom of expression and personality through clothing. It appears, based upon literature that post mastectomy women choose to wear loose blouses, tops, or dresses without darts or princess lines in order to avoid extra space or gaps between breast area and clothing. They may choose high necklines or long sleeves to cover their scars. Because of the limited clothing selection, patients must change their entire style for their future life.

### Purpose of the Study

There are more and more post double mastectomy women who chose to live flat, without having reconstruction surgery or using prostheses. Although the desire for appealing clothing for post mastectomy women is present, currently there is limited ready-to-wear clothing for this special group (Beard, 2011). The purpose of this study was to develop two new basic bodice blocks based on post double mastectomy clothing preferences for women who have undergone double mastectomy surgery without reconstruction. This study is the block creation, part 2, of a study that surveyed clothing preferences (part 1) of women who have undergone a double mastectomy and chose not to have reconstruction.

### Methodology

In part 1 of this study (Gao, 2016), a survey was developed to explore post double mastectomy women’s clothing preferences and expenses. The survey was administered to an online social media group whose members have chosen to live “flat” after a double mastectomy. Based on the research results, most participants had changed their clothing style post mastectomy. More than 45% of participants had experienced having to adjust the clothes to fit their body, while over 25% of participants would alter their clothing if they knew how. They also indicated that they would spend more money if there were clothes designed for them. Based on

the results, it appears that the current available clothing styles do not meet most post double mastectomy women's clothing demands.

Based on basic bodice block-creating processes in the book *Principals of Flat Pattern Design* (MacDonald, 2010) and a video—“Lesson 1- Basic Bodice” from the Studio LOT13 website (Studio LOT13, 2014), the bodice block pattern with bust and waist darts for the creative process was utilized. It was revised to develop two new bodice blocks, one with no darts and one with only a small waist dart.

#### Results and Implications

Results of the survey data revealed that post mastectomy women have problems with the fitting of clothing currently on the market. The bodice block was designed to accommodate the needs of this special female group. The no dart and one waist dart bodice block patterns were developed to fit the post mastectomy woman's physical characteristics. Each of the completed block patterns were cut out and used to make the basic prototype garment, which was made of muslin. The two prototypes were customized on the volunteer post mastectomy model. The garments were evaluated in both static and dynamic positions, and the volunteer was asked to provide feedback on the fit and comfort. Since the garment must accommodate the human body in many different positions, testing it as it is worn is the best way to get the most detailed information.

Comparing the no dart block with the one waist dart block, the one waist dart block had a better fit on the model. It also provided an illusion that the double mastectomy volunteer had a curvy bust area. Based on the one waist dart, future designers can utilize this block to provide more creative design solutions for post double mastectomy women. This has the potential to meet their clothing fitting and aesthetic demands, in the same way as the functions and creativities that a basic body block provides.

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