

## **A MESSAGE TO OUR MEDICARE PATIENTS REGARDING ABDOMINOPLASTY-PANNICULECTOMY**

Unlike traditional insurance plans, Medicare does not have a system where we can determine prior to your procedure if an abdominoplasty or panniculectomy will be covered as a “medically necessary” procedure. That is, we cannot send a predetermination letter, documentation from other physicians, photos, etc., to them beforehand to see if Medicare will pay for your procedure or deny it as a cosmetic procedure. Because of this, we are required BY LAW to inform you of this prior to the procedure, as you may be responsible for the costs of surgery, anesthesia, hospital and lab charges if Medicare does not pay.

In the past, even cases of obvious medical necessity for this procedure have occasionally been denied coverage, despite our written appeals, due to the nature of the procedure. While there clearly is a functional benefit in many patients, a significant number of patients also have abdominoplasty/panniculectomy performed for cosmetic reasons. This is why Medicare does not simply pay for all of these operations.

There are no published Medicare guidelines for “medical necessity” regarding abdominoplasty/panniculectomy. However, those used by Blue Cross of Kansas are helpful to review, as these are fairly standard insurance coverage guidelines. Even if these coverage guidelines are met, Medicare may still deny coverage.

### Covered if:

Pannus hangs below level of the pubis

AND

Weight loss of 100 lbs. or more

AND

Documentation of recurrent skin breakdown

### Not covered:

For low back pain

For hernia formation or repair

For repair of rectus diastasis

Liposuction at time of abdominoplasty/panniculectomy

If Medicare coverage is denied, you have the right to appeal the decision. However, if the appeal process is not successful, you will be responsible for all charges associated with the procedure. We will provide you with an estimate of the anticipated costs, and work with you as much as possible to make the procedure affordable.

We regret the difficulties and financial uncertainties this may cause, but we must abide by these rules if we are to continue to care for Medicare patients. Thanks for your understanding.

Lawrence Plastic Surgery, PA