

SPRING EDITION, 2004

FEATURED ARTICLE FOLLOW UP

Many readers of this newsletter are post-op patients. Just as the readers learn from the article in the newsletter, often those articles are based on information obtained from post-op patients themselves. It's a win-win situation in that regards and that is why we feel it is important for all long term post-op patients to keep their status current with us PacLap. If you haven't had annual visit in the past 12 months, phone the office (415-668-3200 or toll free 1-888-848-8446) to schedule a follow-up appointment either in San Francisco or in Ventura. For those of you living more than three hours away from our offices, schedule a phone appointment, fax back to us the Progress Note with your current labs.

Pacific Laparoscopy has worked hard over the past 20 years to constantly improve our services. We are proud of the procedure we offer, of the facilities we use, and proud of our good results and low complication rates. Follow-up for 18 months post-op included in surgical fee. Continue visits annually for a small flat fee. Some of the patients Barbara follows in the Ventura office had surgery more than 20 years ago. At these visits we review body fat analysis, nutrition, vitamins, bone health, exercise, and overall health. This data is then entered into our data base. If visiting poses a hardship, please let the office know. The irony of the insurance companies' demanding that we submit long term outcomes data, is that they won't pay for the follow up visits or any other costs of collecting that information. It is vital to know the success rate of our over 1200 DS patients. Help us with this! We must see you, our patient for annual visits for life. Your responsibility as the patient is to contact our office every year and make sure either you or PCP has given us your current follow-up weight, labs, and any problems that have been encountered along the way. Just because your PCP is following you, DOES NOT mean that we are automatically getting that much needed data for our files and won't be able to answer that questions if you have not kept contact with us. Part of your responsibility as the patient is to make sure our office has copies of your annual labs every year and you receive an evaluation from us. Some post-op patients may have gained weight back and feel they are a failure, but how can we help our patients if we do not see them or hear from them? What is the expected weight maintenance at 10 years postop? The answer to this and other important questions can only be determined by each and everyone of you keeping us in the loop.

Every post-op patient signed a contract before he or she had surgery that he or she would be a complaint patient. Maintaining close follow -up is a vital part of being complaint. "But, my PCP office sent you a copy of my labs." Unless you have received an acknowledgement from our office, we have not received your labs. What health concerns are you experiencing? Keep current yourself, and please ask anyone you know who has had surgery if they are current with their follow-up. This is important especially to the future duodenal Switch, in addition to being important to you yourself and to Pacific Laparoscopy.

We are recommending our annual panel, with all labs to best take care of you and your future health. If the insurance company will not pay for all these tests, many patients are able to obtain coverage by having their primary care physician order the annual labs. You are your own best advocate.

A copy of what a lab order and evaluation looks like is included in this newsletter. (It can be downloaded from our web site or mailed to you)

Annual labs take 2-3 weeks and may come in several parts with up to 30 pages of “pending” results before they are complete. Times 1200+patients, you can see what enormous job is to keep up with annual labs. Our office is committed to doing its best to get these very important evaluations back to you.....if you help us! Please do your job as a compliant patient: Have your labs drawn annually, have them faxed to our office. Allow about 3 weeks from the time you had them drawn, and if you haven't received an evaluation call and check with us. Schedule your FOLLOW-UP annually, please! Barbara

PS-Another way to help future DS patients is to send insurance company a “thank you.” Let them know your surgical weight loss journey, send pictures, improved health, loss of co-morbidities, decreased cost to them. This can help PLEASE

Regarding the Internet 2003

Our patients know how much we emphasize support, both before and after their surgery. Group Support and being connected to other patients can be vital to successful surgical result. Especially for those who live long distance away from other patients and who are unable to regularly attend our more formal group meetings, contact via the internet can help to fill the void. For this and many other reasons we encourage utilization of the Internet.

Having stated this however, we also want to stress the need to maintain a cautious objective approach to what you read, especially when it does not agree with you own intuition. Be acknowledgeable as possible about the writers and do not automatically believe everything on any site!

We urge all our patients to ask us directly if they have questions about the surgical process. The staff is ready, willing and able to help. We as a team are always striving to improve our program and welcome and encourage input from out patients. Please feel free to directly contact our office for any concerns or questions- we'll either have the answer or do our best to find it for you.