



Is Your Post-Mastectomy Patient Missing Something? The Global Success of Knitted Knockers

Cary S Kaufman MD^{1,2}, Barbara Demorest³

1) Bellingham Regional Breast Center, 2) University of Washington, 3) Knitted Knockers



Rwanda Experience

Background/Objective:

About 35% of women with breast cancer undergo a mastectomy. Many of those women do not have immediate reconstruction, or if they do, it might be insertion of an expander. Besides being a traumatic life event, it is aggravated by having to appear in public in the immediate days and weeks after surgery without an easy acceptable painless prosthesis. Knitted Knockers are hand knitted light weight breast forms which fit into a normal bra allowing the recently operated patient a solution to her appearance. Plus, these are made by volunteers and given free of charge, shipping included.

Methods:

Although not the originator of the Knitted Knocker, the leader started with her own need for the Knocker and visualized the same need multiplied thousands of times across the country and beyond. With no support and only her drive to get this message out, she networked with knitters. She invited knitters from clubs across the country to voluntarily download the pattern, purchase the yarn, and knit the Knocker then to donate it to be given to the next mastectomy patient in any doctors' office or clinic. This volunteer organization is now 7 years old and the leader continues to generate support for all Knitted Knockers to be free of charge and shipping.

Results:

In the last 7 years, over 80,000 Knitted Knockers have been mailed to patients in the US. In addition, they have enlisted over 1,200 other clinics covering all 50 states who similarly have volunteer knitters making and distributing Knockers to their medical communities. In the US they have about 5,000 volunteers knitting and distributing in knitting clubs, yarn stores and private homes. They send out over 1,000 forms per month, postage in 2017 was \$58,000. In Rwanda and Kenya, where prostheses are unavailable, they taught a group of 30 Rwandans to knit the form who are teaching other women how to do so as well (see picture). Women were using newspapers, rags and anything to substitute for a form. The program has sent Knockers to centers in 27 different countries from Belgium to Uruguay. Their website provides the knit pattern which has been downloaded over 1 million times. They've had over 500,000 views of their instructional video. In July 2018 they were awarded the "Best Documentary" at the California Women's Film Festival in Hollywood. They've been honored by the Susan Komen Foundation, the Rwanda Award, Loreal Women of Worth national finalist, on TV podcast of the Today show, People Magazine, Inside Edition, Guideposts, PBS, and have received many other community service awards in the last 7 years.

Conclusions:

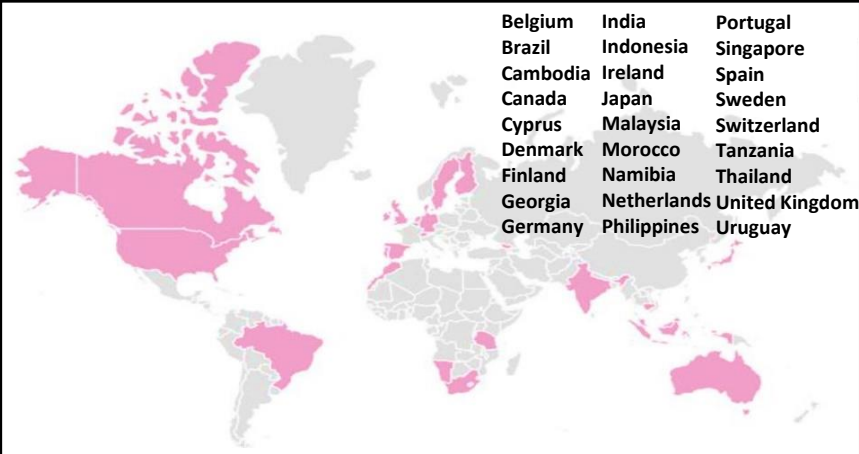
There is a need in the medical community for a soft lightweight knitted breast form that fits in any bra for the early use by patients who have undergone mastectomy. Breast surgeons and patients should become aware of this useful post-mastectomy form which is available to all patients in all 50 States.

U.S. National Statistics:

- Distributing over 1,000 knockers per month.
- 33,417 knockers distributed in 2018.
- Over 80,000 distributed since May 2015.
- Over 5,000 registered knitting individuals/groups.
- All made by volunteers who purchase the materials.
- Free of charge, Free shipping to patients and offices.

27 Countries Using Knitted Knockers:

Pattern has been translated into 8 different languages



Rwanda Experience

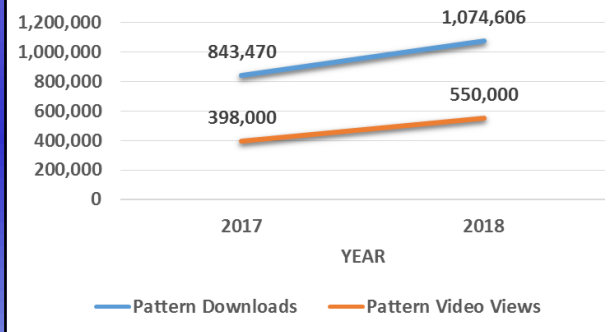
- ✓ Working with the Breast Cancer Initiative of East Africa (BCIEA)
- ✓ In 2016 taught 30 women to make knockers in Rwanda
- ✓ Recently a large Rwandan hospital ordered 500 pairs to distribute across the country made by those who were taught
- ✓ **Knitted Knockers** named "Women Achievers of the Year 2016" by the Rwandan New times.



National Recognition:

- ✓ Best Documentary Award / California Women's Film Festival Hollywood
- ✓ Today Show, Inside Edition, PBS,
- ✓ People Magazine, Delta Airlines mag.
- ✓ Publicity in France & Italy,
- ✓ Many Community Service Awards
- ✓ Komen Foundation Honoree

Pattern Downloads and Video Views



**For more information on Knitted Knockers,
Contact
Knitted Knockers Support Foundation at
knittedknockers.org**