



November 20, 2023

Optima Health/ Optima Health Behavioral Health  
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Attention: Appeals Department

Re: Patricia Baumann  
Patient ID: 5723167\*01  
Reference #: 23904060

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter as Patricia Baumann's First Level Appeal of Optima Health's decision to deny coverage for Dr. Jaime Schwartz to perform Lipedema Reduction Surgery. It is my understanding that in the letter from Optima Health, the reason our request was denied was because it was deemed "investigational", not medically necessary, and cosmetic.

In attempting to review what Optima Health would consider "medically necessary" there is nowhere on the website that addresses the disease of lipedema. We can confirm however, Miss Baumann was not only diagnosed by Dr. Jaime Schwartz, but she was diagnosed by two other physicians, Dr. David Dexter and Dr. Clifford. Both providers confirmed the diagnosis and agreed the surgical route would be the best option for her.

Simple everyday tasks have become difficult such as getting out of bed. Miss Baumann has tried numerous conservative treatment throughout the years, but nothing has shown any permanent improvement. Compression garments, manual lymphatic drainage massage, dry brushing and many other treatments have failed.

Lipedema is a chronic disease of adipose hyper-deposition, often mistaken for obesity and causes significant impairment to mobility and quality of life. There is no cure for lipedema, and treatments are limited to invasive liposuction or excisional surgery to control symptoms and enhance mobility.

It is possible that the reviewing physician is not familiar with Lipedema and the catastrophic effect it has on one's lifestyle and quality of life. I believe that a further review of the documents that were originally submitted be done. Based on this, Miss Patricia Baumann is requesting that you reconsider this decision and allow Dr. Schwartz to perform the necessary procedures. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our office at (310)882-5454.

We look forward to hearing from you,  
Jae Arellano  
Jaime Schwartz, MD



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## **EFFECTIVENESS OF LIPEDEMA SURGERY**

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There are approximately 1,000 lipedema surgeries performed every year in the United States. They are essential to improving function and reducing pain for patients suffering from this disease.

An August 2014 review of the forty-seven publications from 1982 to 2014, found agreement of the forty-seven publications from 1982 to 2014, found agreement that lipectomy is an applicable and effective treatment for chronic medical conditions such as lipedema. *Liposuction: A Surgical Tool to Improve the Quality of Life after Morbid Medical Conditions: Review of Literature*, Elkhatab HA 2014 Anaplastology 3:133. Lipectomy for lipedema has a definite positive and long-lasting effect. *Liposuction is an Effective Treatment for Lipedema-Results of a Study with 25 Patients*, Rapprich. Stefan, MD et al, Journal of the German Soc of Derm: Vol 9, (2012); p 33-40. (the majority of patients no longer require prolonged further therapy. Reduction of pain and drastic improvement in the patient's quality of life is noted in all patients.)

Liposuction has ceased to define a specific procedure and became synonymous with a surgical technique or tool the same as the surgical knife, laser, electrocautery, suture material, or even wound-dressing products. *Functional and Therapeutic Indications of Liposuction: Personal Experience and Review of the Literature*, Bishara Atiyeh 2015 Annals of Plastic Surgery 75(2). Liposuction results in fewer complications such as hematoma formation, skin necrosis, wound infection, and dehiscence with delayed healing and prolonged hospital stay. *Aesthetic or Functional Indications for Liposuction*, Michel Costagliola, MD et al, *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*, Volume 33, Issue 8, November 2013, Pages 1212–1213. In other words, liposuction is to surgical lipectomy what endoscopic cholecystectomy is to open surgical cholecystectomy.

Lipedema surgery decreases the mechanical stress on lymphatic vessels sufficiently to allow for the cessation of compression garment use beyond the initial postoperative period. *Long-term Outcome After Surgical Treatment of Lipedema*, Anne Warren Peled, MD, et al, Annals of Plastic Surgery Volume 68, Number 3, March 2012.



The international expert in lipedema, Dr. Josef Stutz, has studied the effects on the health of his patients for many years. The effects in a patient's body from the unusual gait from lipedema fat storage around the knees causes multiple joint complications. Stutz concluded that lipectomy is the only treatment that can remove the mechanical impediment to normal gait and prevent joint deterioration. *Liposuction of Lipedema for Prevention of Later Joint Complications*; Stutz, Josef MD, Vasomed, Vol 23 (2011).

Wollina and colleagues reported on 111 patients mostly with advanced lipedema treated by this technique in our center between 2007 and 2018. The median pain level before treatment was 7.8 and 2.2 at the end of the treatment. An improvement of mobility could be achieved in all patients. Bruising was also reduced. Serious adverse events were observed in 1.2% of procedures, the infection rate was 0% and the bleeding rate was 0.3%. Liposuction is an effective treatment for painful lipedema. *Dermatol Ther.* 2019 Mar; 32(2) In another study of 209 patients, quality of life increased significantly after surgery with a reduction of pain and swelling and decreased tendency to easy bruising. Bauer and colleagues, *New Insights on Lipedema: The Enigmatic Disease of the Peripheral Fat.* *Plast. Reconstr Surg.* 2019 Dec. 144(6)

Thus, lipedema surgery is safe, effective, and the standard of care for many, many years. Indeed, the International Consensus Conference on Lipedema issued conclusions that although lipedema has been underdiagnosed in places like the United States, multiple studies from Germany have reported long-term benefits for as long as eight years after lipedema surgery.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3135643> 3