

BREAST FRIENDS FOREVER

What happens when breast cancer threatens to put an end to all your dreams and even life? Six women – among them are three with the disease – share how they are helping to make the going easier for others.

By HANNAH CHOO Photographed by ANDY WONG Styled by CHIN/ARM COLLECTIVE

Dr Karen Sng *Plastic surgeon*

In private practice at Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre, Dr Karen Sng's 10-year career in plastic surgery includes patients who lost their breasts to cancer. Reconstruction can be done with body tissue or man-made implants (according to factors such as the amount of tissue present in the body). "It can be one or a combination of both", she says.

Although her career is more often associated with beauty and glamour, Dr Sng, 42, clarifies that it goes beyond the pursuit of perfection. "Plastic surgery covers a wide scope, such as reconstruction, congenital deformities and cosmetic surgery. Where treatment is concerned, I like that it's not just removing the cancer, but also to re-create and reconstruct," she adds.

Though much ink has been spilt on Angelina Jolie's preventive double mastectomy, it is not recommended for everyone. Says Dr Sng: "Much counselling is needed, with many implications, such as a dip in self-esteem, to be considered. While it may not be necessary for everybody, her decision has successfully helped to increase awareness of breast cancer risks and reconstruction options."

It also explains why her being female appeals to breast cancer patients, not that Dr Sng feels that her gender is an advantage. "Some women are a little shy when it comes to their breasts, so consulting a female doctor may make them feel less conscious. Others may feel it is easier for me to empathise with them and understand their body image issues."

TOGA DRESS, IN GOOD COMPANY

"My work is about the ability to re-create and reconstruct."

Hair and Makeup by Hulimin Ng

