

Could your breast implants be making you sick? Time to consult Bala Cynwyd plastic surgeon Kirk Brandow.



Plastic surgeon Kirk Brandow with his team at the Brandow Clinic in Bala Cynwyd (clockwise from top right): Diane Garcia, Joan Gallagher, Kathleen Scotto and Mindi Dittus.

By Dawn Warden

When the FDA acknowledged last year that Breast Implant Illness, or BII, was, in fact, a real thing, women everywhere screamed, “Finally!”

Among them was Carol [last name withheld], 64.

For years, she’d had severe chronic insomnia and a strangely persistent, itchy rash. Doctor after doctor dismissed it as contact dermatitis, prescribing only steroids and creams.

“They did absolutely nothing for me, and quite honestly, frustrated and infuriated me,” Carol recalls.

Then Carol started thinking about her 30-year-old silicone breast implants and reading about the myriad symptoms of BII: immune problems, rash, extreme fatigue, memory issues, hair loss, depression, body pain and disrupted sleep. BII took so many forms, it seemed anyone with implants with undiagnosed complaints might have it.

But when she suggested that her implants might be the problem, she got nowhere. You're allergic to Prozac, doctors told her. You're menopausal. Try medical marijuana; it might calm you down.

After three years of suffering, she knew what she needed to do: find a sympathetic, skilled surgeon who specializes in breast explant surgery.

A Google search and several phone calls later, she drove 140 miles to meet plastic surgeon **Kirk Brandow** in his Bala Cynwyd office.

"It was obvious he not only had empathy ... but he was fully behind the notion that silicone breast implants were wreaking havoc on women," Carol says.

"BII is a very real thing and I've been speaking up about it for nearly 30 years," says **Brandow**, who last used silicone in 1992, when they were taken off the market for 14 years. "It took another 13 years for the FDA to finally support patients claims that silicone implants were making them very, very ill."



Women who come in with implant issues get graphic validation. "All I have to do is show a silicone-implant patient my photo gallery and they're instantly horrified and ready to try an explant," he says.

While many choose to swap out silicone for saline implants, women are increasingly opting to have them removed and reconstructed with a breast lift instead.

Before 2017, **Brandow** had only done two explants total, neither with a lift. These days, he's performing two a week. (Unfortunately, insurance doesn't cover the procedure which can cost as much as \$8,000 or more.)

On Sept. 11, 2019, **Dr. Brandow** removed Carol's silicone implants, which had silently ruptured and had been leaking into her system for years.



Scar-tissue capsules and ruptured silicone implants after their removal by Dr. Brandow.

"I feel 100 percent better," she says. "I would tell anyone considering implants ... to really think about the consequences. Saline is the only way to go, but after what I went through, I don't think I would do it again. Healthy is a thousand times better than busty. And as **Dr. Brandow** proved, there are other ways to get perky breasts."

Consistently named a Top Doc, **Dr. Kirk Brandow** specializes in artful, natural and age-appropriate aesthetic surgery of the face and body and innovative, non-invasive cosmetic procedures. The Brandow Clinic has offices at 191 Presidential Boulevard in Bala Cynwyd and 741 Bay Ave. in Somers Point, NJ.