

HELPING PEOPLE TO RETURN TO SOCIETY

ELŻBIETA RADZIKOWSKA, Ph.D., Head of the Plastic Surgery Department, Central Clinical Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration in Warsaw, talks to "Polish Market".

PM Plastic surgery is usually associated with the private sector while we are talking at the Plastic Surgery Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration Hospital. How does work in the private sector differ from your work here?

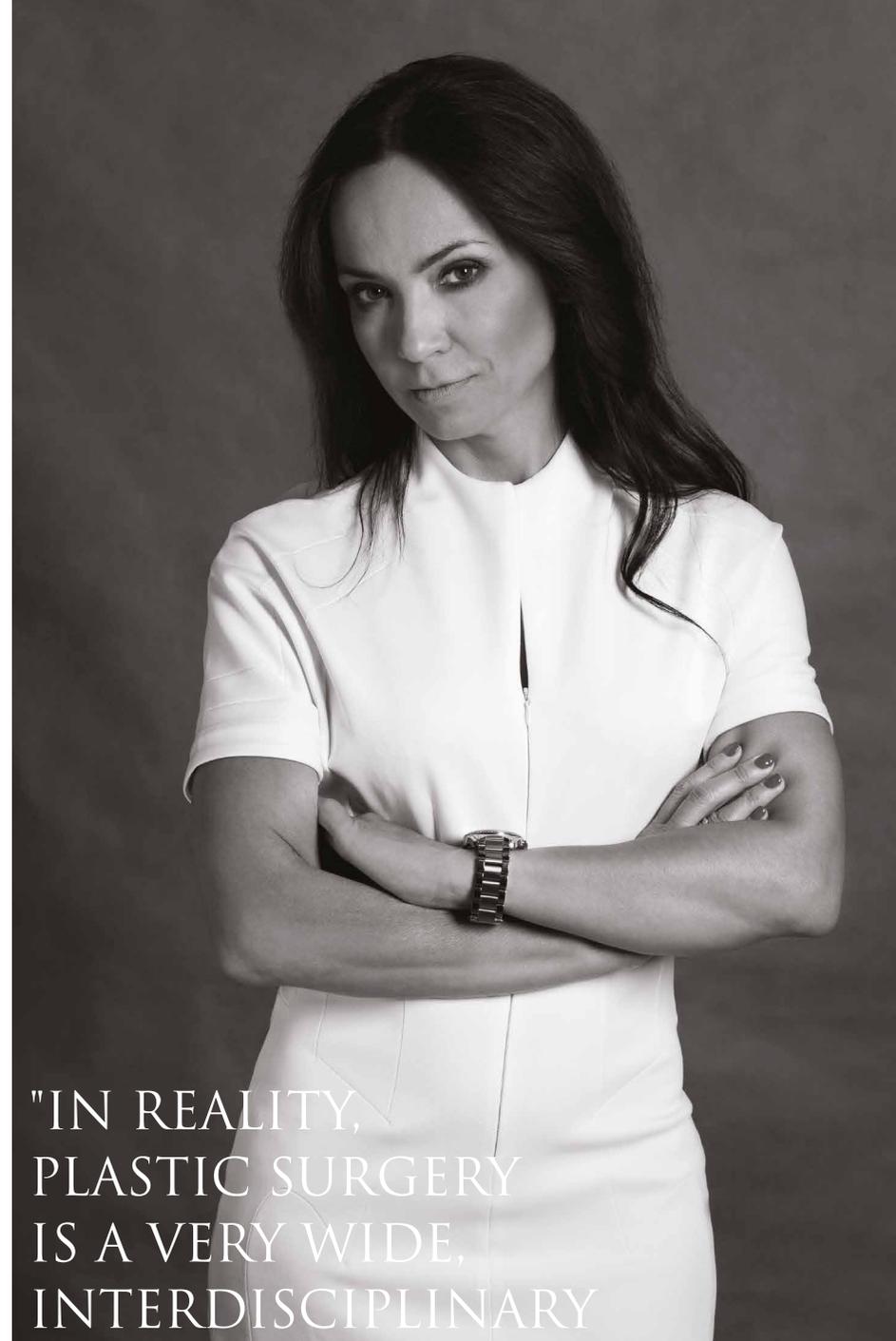
First of all, we must define the term "plastic surgery." The average Pole associates it with beautifying activity. In reality, plastic surgery is a very wide, interdisciplinary part of surgery which treats congenital and post-traumatic defects. It also includes reconstructive surgery which involves procedures aimed at removing neoplastic lesions, especially in the face and skull area. Also, the entire hand surgery belongs to plastic surgery. The scope of our activity is very wide. We also co-operate with other departments such as laryngology, neurosurgery or orthopaedics. Sometimes we must reconstruct the entire nose using various tissues, following its removal because of cancer. As regards the differences between the private and public sector, we must remember that the former is not limited to beautifying operations. The advantage of our department is that we are located in a hospital and this is always associated with greater safety. We too perform aesthetic surgery procedures. We have a separate typically commercial ward where we carry out these operations. Its patients are often persons disqualified at private facilities for health or age reasons or because of the extent of the procedure. The main advantage of our department is that after surgery such patients remain under much greater control of various specialists.

PM You mentioned a purely commercial ward. Is this the response to the current model of hospitals? Does this ward finance the rest of your activities?

This ward earns enough to cover its expenditures and brings us additional funds for development. Today, hospitals must support themselves instead of generating losses. However, I must admit that we set up this ward primarily in order to provide patients with a high level of safety. I also work at private clinics and know from experience that sometimes I am unable to perform certain procedures in view of strains, age or additional illnesses. At our ward we have the comfort of knowing that in the event of complications the patient already is in hospital and can be given immediate aid. On occasions patients also require more detailed diagnostics before the surgery which is much easier at a hospital. We must remember that aesthetic surgeries are no life-saving procedures. This is why it is necessary to remember that everything must be done so that nothing wrong happens to the patient during or after the surgery. This is important because sometimes we perform really extensive procedures, especially in patients who have managed to lose a lot of weight.

PM Which are the most frequent procedures?

It is hard to say because we cannot be compared with private clinics. We are oriented towards reconstructive procedures, for example, breast reconstruction. We carry out such operations several times a week. We want to establish a closer co-operation with oncologists so that patients can have the entire process from mastectomy, through treatment and including reconstruction carried out at one place. A new radiotherapy department is being created in a neighbouring building and we would like to work closely with them as well. This is very important because breast cancer is an illness affecting ever-younger women. Such patients



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must return to society and function there without problems. Our role is to ensure that patients feel as comfortable as possible after leaving the hospital. Another very popular and frequently performed procedure is liposuction. Today, it is carried out not only for aesthetic reasons but also as a method of acquiring stem cells. They are extracted from fatty tissue and used in orthopaedics, etc. •