

Introduction

- ❖ **Medical tourism** — the practice of traveling internationally or domestically to obtain medical treatment.
- ❖ **Aesthetic surgery tourism** — a subset of medical tourism which has:
 - Exponentially gained popularity
 - Rapidly emerged as a crisis for patients, hospitals, and involved physicians
- ❖ **International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS)**⁽¹⁾
 - In 2023 — 15.8 million procedures done worldwide, 1.8 million done in the U.S.
 - Among the top 5 most popular procedures worldwide and nationally — Liposuction, abdominoplasty, breast surgery
- ❖ **Patients in the U.S. travel for aesthetic surgery in hopes of** ^(2,3)
 - Discounted procedures
 - Faster scheduling
 - Affordable flights and hotel arrangements
- ❖ **Third party websites, or 'medical tourism brokers'**⁽⁴⁾
 - Used often by patients seeking surgery abroad
 - Connect individuals to hospitals/doctors in another country
 - Remain largely unregulated
 - Have a limited discussion of surgical risk

Purpose

- ❖ Aesthetic surgery tourism is on the rise, but long-term costs and complications have not been fully evaluated.
- ❖ Our single-center retrospective study recorded outcomes in patients presenting with complications after traveling for aesthetic surgery.

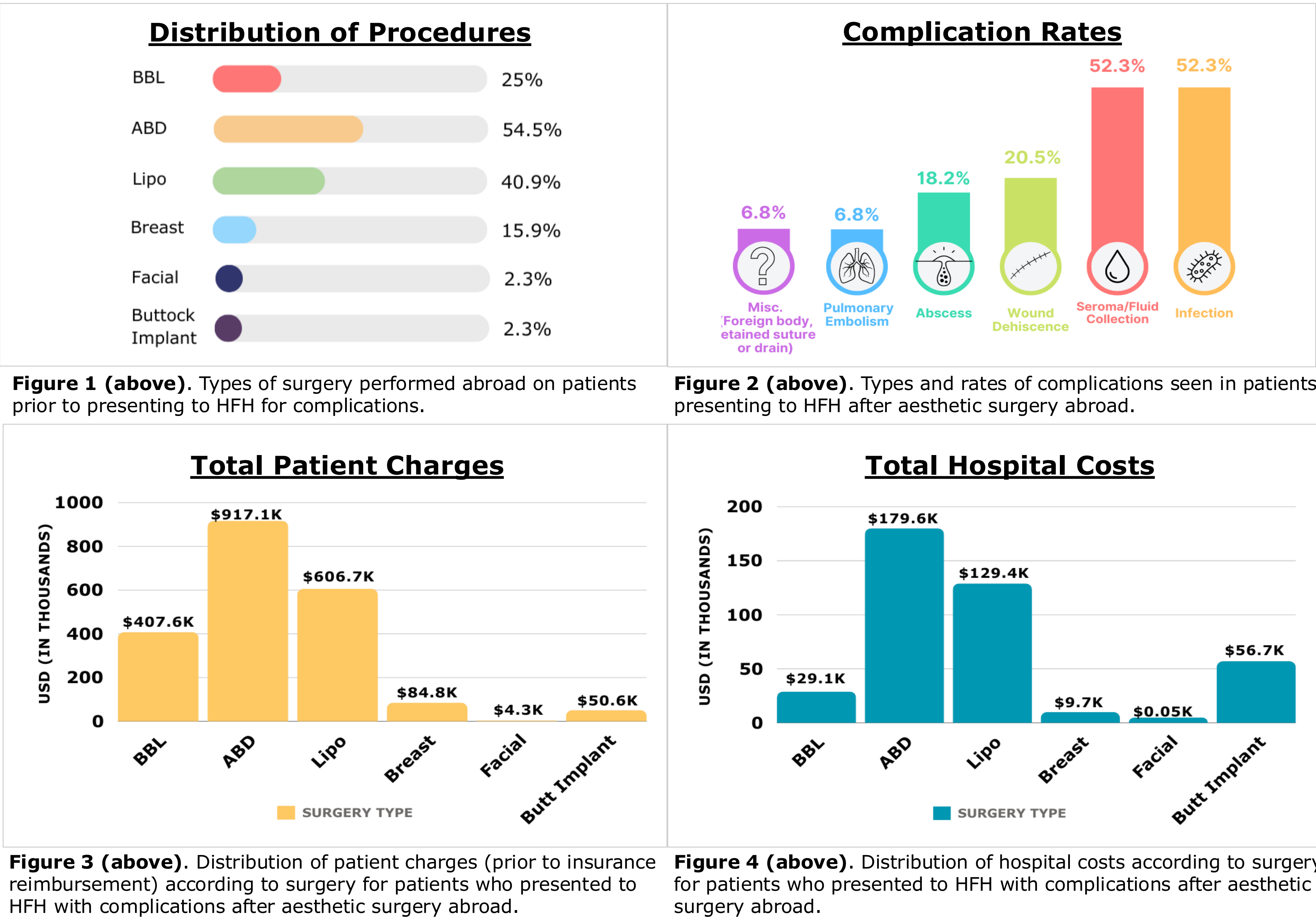
Methods

- ❖ **Retrospective chart review** — patients between 2021 and 2024 presenting to the Henry Ford Health (HFH) Emergency Department (ED) with complications after aesthetic surgery abroad.
 - Medical record numbers were obtained from providers.
- ❖ **Compiled data** — type of surgery, location, complications, number of ED visits, interventions, and admission length of stay (LOS).
- ❖ **Financial data** — patient charges and hospital costs obtained through HFH Finance Department.
 - Unable to track insurance reimbursement for patient charges

Results

A total of 44 patients were seen by HFH Plastic Surgery with complications after aesthetic surgery tourism.

- ❖ **Surgery type** — 54.5% abdominoplasty (ABD), 40.9% liposuction (Lipo), 25% had Brazilian butt lift (BBL), 15.9% breast, 2.3% jaw surgery (Facial), and 2.3% buttock implant. **(figure 1)**
- ❖ **Complications** — infection (52.3%), pulmonary embolism (6.8%), seroma/fluid collection (52.3%), abscess (18.2%), wound dehiscence (20.5%), foreign body/retained suture/retained drain (6.8%). **(figure 2)**
- ❖ **Locations** — Miami (63.7%); International (22.7%) including Dominican Republic, Columbia, Turkey, and Korea; locally with a non-board-certified (NBC) surgeon (9.1%), and other US state (4.5%).
- ❖ **Interventions** —Average ED visits: 1.75. Average LOS: 3.16 days. Patients requiring operating room or bedside intervention was 25% and 61.4% respectively.
- ❖ **Financial data** — Retrieved for 41 patients. Total hospital cost was \$282,936.06, and average per patient was \$6,900.88. Total patient charges were \$1,435,962.35, and average per patient was \$35,023.47 **(figures 3 and 4).**



Discussion

- ❖ **At face value, traveling for aesthetic surgery can seem like a trustworthy and safe option to patients.**
- ❖ **Although aesthetic surgery tourism can be a more affordable option for some patients in the short term, it can:**
 - Jeopardize patient safety
 - Place an increasing financial burden on the healthcare system
- ❖ **Potential interventions:**
 - Increase awareness before travel at preoperative clearance appointments
 - Provide options to consult a U.S. Board-Certified Plastic Surgeon for a second opinion
- ❖ **For the Future:**
 - A national database to track aesthetic surgeries done abroad and rates of complications can better inform patients and physicians of potential consequences.

Conclusion

- ❖ **The real cost of discount plastic surgery is hidden in the events that follow.**
- ❖ **It is crucial to educate patients on risks, complications, and hidden cost associated with traveling both domestically and internationally for aesthetic surgery.**

References

1. International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2024, June 12). ISAPS International Survey of Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2023. New Jersey.
2. Venditto C, Gallagher M, Hettinger P, Havlik R, Zarb R, Argenta A, Doren E, Sanger J, Klement K, Dzwierzynski W, LoGiudice J, Jensen J. Complications of Cosmetic Surgery Tourism: Case Series and Cost Analysis. Aesthet Surg J. 2021 Apr 12;41(5):627-634. doi: 10.1093/asj/sjaa092. PMID: 32291444.
3. Klein HJ, Simic D, Fuchs N, Schweizer R, Mehra T, Giovanoli P, Plock JA. Complications After Cosmetic Surgery Tourism. Aesthet Surg J. 2017 Apr 1;37(4):474-482. doi: 10.1093/asj/sjw198. PMID: 28364525.
4. Penney K, Snyder J, Crooks VA, Johnston R. Risk communication and informed consent in the medical tourism industry: a thematic content analysis of Canadian broker websites. BMC Med Ethics. 2011 Sep 26;12:17. doi: 10.1186/1472-6939-12-17. PMID: 21943392; PMCID: PMC3189886.