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The holiday that really can make a new woman of you

AFTER years of looking in the mirror and cringing at the sight of her wrinkled neck and drooping jowls, Jill Garland decided it was time for a face-lift.

Eager to keep the procedure secret and save some money in the process, the 52-year-old Cheshire woman opted for an all-inclusive cosmetic surgery package to Poland.

She packed her bags, told friends she was going on holiday and returned two weeks later looking like a new woman.

She joins the hundreds of people who travel to Poland every year with North Wales company Euro-medica, for cut-price cosmetic surgery.

Owner Alina Deebie, from Northop Hall, near Mold, says the attraction of going to the pretty town of Wroclaw in the southwest of her native Poland for the procedure includes cheaper operations (about half the price charged in the UK), excellent after care and absolute discretion.

She says that within a few days of being under the knife, patients can go sight-seeing and shopping. And by the time they return to Britain two weeks later, their stitches have been removed and their faces look firmer and younger.

"Some women don't want their families or friends to know that they have undergone treatment, so the fact that they travel abroad as if they're going on a holiday helps them," she says. "They get the benefit of after-care in Poland and the scars are mostly cleared up by the time they get home."

This was the case with Jill.

"I was fed up of my baggy neck and was interested in the idea of having surgery while on holiday," she says. "This way no one would know what I was doing and I could go exploring the country's attractions afterwards for a fraction of the price of some Swiss clinics."

"After reading about the services that surgeons in Poland offered, I phoned their tourist board and they gave me Euro-medica's phone number."

She paid £2,500 for the package which included flights, accommodation, surgery and daily trips to a medical clinic to check for infections or any other post-operative problems.



By Penny Fray

March, says: "After arriving in Poland I was assessed by the surgeon and had the operation done in the same afternoon because I wanted to go sight seeing as soon as possible."

"I spent over four hours in surgery under local anaesthetic. My face was just numb and I didn't feel a thing apart from slight discomfort afterwards. I wanted to have a local anaesthetic rather than a general because I had never had an operation in my life and I was scared to have a general anaesthetic."

Afterwards she went to the clinic daily to have the stitches cleaned and be checked for any infection.

WITHIN a couple of days I could go out with a hooded jacket and bruised face to go shopping," she says.

"While I was there, I also visited a prognosis clinic for a full health check up which cost me about £13 and took less than an hour to get the results."

"When I got home people who didn't know I had surgery were telling me how fantastic I looked."

Alina, who studied both medicine and rehabilitation in Poland, accompanies patients on each trip.

She says: "We carry out stringent health checks on the patients before they travel. And if a woman is suffering from diabetes or from very high blood pressure then we won't carry out any procedure on them."

"I've never encountered problems because I go over to Poland with my customers and make sure they go for a medical check-up every day after surgery."

The 51-year-old says she only uses one of the country's leading plastic surgeons Dr Henry Knakiewicz - a man she knows and trusts. He was the head of the Department for Reconstructive Surgery at Wroclaw University for a over a decade before setting up his own practice in 1994.

She says it is a regulated practice and all cosmetic surgeons are required to have done six years of general medicine, three years of general surgery and reconstructive surgery and an additional three



LOOKING GOOD: Alina accompanies all patients to Poland to make sure they get the best possible care after their cosmetic surgery

Picture: JEFF PITT

years in cosmetic surgery. The idea came to Alina after the death of her husband Dr David Deebie, a molecular scientist who worked at NEWI college in Wrexham. He died of congenital heart disease at the age of 43.

Knowing that Poland offered cheap diagnostic tests to avoid the risk of premature death she thought British patients would benefit from these facilities as well as cosmetic surgery.

She adds: "After writing an

article for a magazine I was asked to do a television documentary and clients flocked to me."

Alina takes up to six people every fortnight to Poland for a two-week "vacation".

There have been reports on television and in the media about failed face lifts and post-operative infections at some Eastern European clinics but Alina says: "We avoid dangerous procedures so I've never encountered a botched job under my supervision."

Nonetheless, there is trouble on the horizon. As Poland prepares to join the EC an increasing number of surgeons are charging more for cosmetic surgery.

"Eventually, the price advantage will diminish as Polish surgeons become as expensive as British ones," says Alina. "If that happens, I may start concentrating on the diagnostic work."

Jill Garland is a pseudonym; her real name has been changed to protect her privacy.