

Talking Points for Dr. Bo Pomahac
Carmen Tarleton Reveal
Wednesday, May 1, 2013

- Thank you Erin.
- I first met Carmen in June 2007 when she arrived at the Brigham following an attack that resulted in some of the worst injuries that I have seen in my career.
- She was severely burned – over 80% of her body – and unrecognizable to those who knew her.
- She has certainly come a long way since then.
- Carmen made such terrific progress because she is a fighter.
- Over the past five years, she fought through 55 surgeries.
- But despite our best reconstructive efforts, Carmen was left as you see in this image (show current photo of Carmen) –disfigured and in pain.
- As a result of the scar tissue in her mouth, Carmen was unable to adequately control her lips, so she would drool almost constantly.
- And because of the scars on her neck, she was unable to turn her head from side to side or lift her chin and the constriction caused her pain.
- As we began to make progress with our face transplant program, Carmen and I began to talk about the possibility of a new face and neck for her through transplantation.
- Throughout the rigorous evaluation process we talked about the challenges she would face as a result of the complex immunology she was left with due to the many surgeries, skin grafts, and blood transfusions she has endured.
- We knew that identifying a match for Carmen would be difficult, and that managing her rejection after the transplant could also prove challenging, but we developed a plan to address this.
- Together with our colleagues in transplant medicine, we were able to work through our plan to get Carmen to where she is today, almost miraculously, with no apparent signs of rejection.

- I believe I can safely say that Carmen is the most immunologically complex patient that has ever received a composite tissue transfer – meaning a face or hand transplant.
- This case is the first of its kind in that Carmen already had an active immune response against the donor tissue.
- Just as we explored and defined the surgical technique for face transplantation, in this case, we have pioneered a new frontier in what is immunologically possible.
- Today, about two months post-transplant, Carmen’s results are excellent.
- For those of you who are familiar with our prior 4 face transplant cases, you can see that Carmen’s transplant covers more surface area than the other cases as it incorporates the neck tissue as well.
- This has allowed more mobility for Carmen as she is now able to turn her head from side to side and the pain in her neck has been relieved.
- She is beginning to regain control of her lips to address the drooling that she experienced before.
- And, of course I am biased, but I think she looks great.
- Carmen continues to meet regularly with the medical team, including physical and occupational therapists, to ensure she is healing and recovering appropriately.
- As with other transplant recipients, Carmen will remain on anti-rejection medication for the rest of her life
- And she will likely undergo some additional follow up surgical procedures.
- Over the next 3-6 months, Carmen can expect to gain more control over the muscles in her face.
- In the next 6 months – 1 year, sensation will begin to return to her face. We know from previous patients that once this sensation begins to return, it goes on to improve for years.
- I want to thank the donor’s family, and Miranda for speaking on their behalf. Your families selflessness has given Carmen her life back.
- I must also thank our partners – the New England Organ Bank and the Department of Defense - for their continued support in our program.
- We could not do what we do without you!

- But I especially want to thank Carmen for her trust in us and for her courage in this journey.
- As Abraham Lincoln famously said, “In the end it is not the years in your life that counts. It is the life in your years.” And I hope that's what we give to our patients, and especially Carmen, who has proven she has got a lot of life yet to live!” 😊
- She is certainly one of the most inspirational people I have ever met, and it is an honor for me to be sitting next to her today.
- Thank you.