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Constance M. Chen, MD, MPH
Maria M. LoTempio, MD
Omega Hospital

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Drs. Constance M. Chen and Maria M. LoTempio—Omega Hospital Recreating Lives After Breast Cancer

WRITTEN BY AMY FERRARA SMITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE RANDON

CONSTANCE CHEN, MD, MPH, AND MARIA LOTEMPIO, MD, PC, travel regularly from New York City to Omega Hospital in Metairie in order to share their medical expertise of breast reconstruction with area patients. They are part of a team of distinguished plastic surgeons called the NOLA Group for the Advancement of Breast Reconstructions (NOLA GABRs), a group that formed under Dr. Robert J. Allen in 2009 in order to centralize the medical skills of some of the country's leading breast reconstructive surgeons for patients living in the southeast.

Although they don't live here on a permanent basis, both Constance and Maria have called the New Orleans metropolitan area home before. Most recently, in 2007, Maria participated in a microsurgery breast reconstruction fellowship under Dr. Robert J. Allen. One of the locations of the fellowship was Ochsner Baptist Medical Center in uptown.

Ten years earlier, with her parents already having relocated to New Orleans, Constance also found her way south in pursuit of a Master of Public Health from the Tulane University in 1997. When she first moved to New Orleans, she brought with her a degree in history from Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges and years of experience

in a prestigious realm of the publishing industry. The latter included stints as a founding assistant editor of *Men's Journal* and the author of her first book, "The Sex Side of Life: Mary Ware Dennett's Pioneering Battle for Birth Control and Sex Education."

"I've always loved both the publishing and medical worlds," said Constance, who loves to read and added that it was a writing assignment that finally inspired her to explore a career in medicine. After earning her master's degree from Tulane, Chen left New Orleans in pursuit of a Doctor of Medicine from Stanford University School of Medicine, which she earned in 2001. She went on to do her surgical residency at the University of Washington in Seattle before moving to New York City to complete her clinical research fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, plastic surgery residency at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Cornell-Columbia and microsurgery fellowship at New York University Medical Center.

"I absolutely love taking care of patients, especially breast cancer survivors," she said. "I love helping women regain their quality of life after they have undergone arduous breast cancer treatment." After years of maintaining a practice in New York City, she has finally found her way back south as a NOLA GABR and a member

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of the plastic surgery faculty at Tulane University. She will continue to work and live in NYC with her husband, Stephen Warren, M.D., who is also a plastic surgeon, while calling southeast Louisiana home again. And, although she will reside in New Orleans, Constance is hoping to meet patients from the Northshore, as well.

“Omega is in close proximity to the Northshore,” she said, “and provides world-class concierge level care to all patients. Women from Mandeville, Covington, Madisonville and Slidell have convenient access to a first-rate hospital without having to fly out of town.”

She is also looking forward to working with her friend and colleague Maria, and added, “Everyone gets along well in the NOLA GABRs group. There is a great chemistry in and out of the office.”

From the time she was six and living in Buffalo, NY, Maria LoTempio knew she wanted to be a surgeon. She remembers visiting the doctor often for common child ailments such as ear infections and colds. She admired the man in the white coat who had an abundance of knowledge and the skill to heal her. Around the same time, she also liked to play the skill game Operation, which allows players to act as surgeons and pick small pieces out of magnetized holes in a plastic body. Maria remembers asking her pediatrician if doctors could really pick items out of people. When he said yes, she made up her mind then to be a surgeon.

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Maria graduated from Georgetown University with a degree in nursing, and she earned her Doctor of Medicine at State University of New York at Buffalo School of Medicine. She completed a residency in head and neck surgery at David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and a residency in plastic surgery at Medical University of South Carolina.

Professionally, she has lived by the motto: “Anything is attainable if you work hard enough to achieve it.”

Maria not only travels between New York and New Orleans, but she also maintains a medical career in Charleston, SC. Still, she has a fondness for the city farthest south. “I love New Orleans,” she said with enthusiasm. “It’s one of my favorite cities. The people and culture are incredible.”

Omega Hospital is located at 2525 Severn Avenue in Metairie. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 504-832-4200 or toll-free 800-535-4177.



TOP: Dr. Maria M. LoTempio is part of a team of distinguished plastic surgeons called the NOLA Group for the Advancement of Breast Reconstructions. She specializes in breast reconstruction at the Omega Hospital in Metairie. LEFT: An avid reader and a founding editor of Men’s Journal, Dr. Constance Chen, MD, MPH, earned her Doctor of Medicine from Stanford University before finding her way back south as a NOLA GABR and a member of the plastic surgery faculty at Tulane University.

