

NEWS &gt; HEALTH

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# What's Hot in Healthcare: Brazilian Butt Lifts on the rise in Florida, but are they getting safer?



The Associated Press

A Plantation plastic surgery center used an obstetrician/gynecologist as an unqualified anesthesiologist and a Brazilian butt lift patient died after surgery, a state complaint says. New Florida laws are trying to make this surgery safer.

By **CINDY KRISCHER GOODMAN** | [cgoodman@sunsentinel.com](mailto:cgoodman@sunsentinel.com) | South Florida Sun Sentinel

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People in South Florida are dying from Brazilian Butt Lifts, yet their popularity is rising.

A new Florida law aims to make the procedure safer, but some experts think it needs to go further to curb the risk from this surgery.

A Brazilian Butt Lift involves a surgeon boosting the size and shape of the buttocks by injecting fat removed from somewhere else on the body via liposuction. The death rate from BBLs is the highest among any plastic surgery, mostly because some doctors inadvertently have injected fat clots into the vessels in the gluteal muscle. That can cause a “fat emboli,” which is when particles of fat enter the bloodstream, travel to the heart or lungs, block circulation and can cause fatal results.

South Florida is the capital of high-volume, low-cost, strip-mall clinics that do BBLs. It also is the area of the state where most of the deaths from the surgery occurs.

Twenty-five women in South Florida have died from BBL complications and two nearly died between 2010 and 2022. All but one of the surgeries were done at high-volume, low-budget clinics, according to a study published in February in [The Aesthetic Surgery Journal](#). The study found 2021 was the deadliest year for BBLs in South Florida.

Yet even reports of deaths haven't cooled demand. Brazilian Butt Lift is the most Googled cosmetic surgery in Florida, with more than 20,000 searches a month. In 2021, there was a 37% yearly increase in BBLs performed in the U.S. or a total of 61,387 surgeries, according to The Aesthetic Plastic Surgery National Databank.

Florida lawmakers want to make BBLs safer.

A law effective July 1, 2023, requires Florida physicians to follow two new rules. First, they must conduct an in-person examination of the patient the day before the procedure. Second, they must use ultrasound guidance to clearly see that fat is injected only in the upper layers under the skin and never into the muscle.

Some plastic surgeons believe simply requiring professionals to use ultrasound guidance doesn't go far enough.

“I don't think an ultrasound done by a physician who does not specialize in it is enough to improve the safety factor significantly,” said Boca Raton plastic surgeon Gregory Albert of the Optimization Centre. “I also think the fat doesn't need to be

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“What is going on is too many cases done in too short a time by too many unqualified operators” he said. “Florida needs to limit the number of BBLs by the same surgeon in one day. To do those procedures quickly you need multiple assistants, and multiple assistants leads to multiple problems.”

Patients arrive at Albert’s Boca Raton office with misshapen arms or other body parts as a result of the liposuction some surgeons do to relocate fat to the buttocks. “Sometimes they take it from areas of the body the patient didn’t consent to take it from,” Albert said.

While the new Florida law is a start, he said, further research needs to be done on how the state can reduce the number of deaths and complications from this cosmetic procedure.

## **At-home tests for Alzheimer’s Disease**

Floridians can now purchase a test online to take at home and learn their risk of Alzheimer’s Disease.

Quest is the first to sell an at-home test and is charging \$399. The AD-Detect test measures the amyloid-beta ratio in your blood to indicate your risk level. A lower ratio suggests more amyloid plaques and an increased risk of Alzheimer’s, while a higher ratio suggests less risk.

Quest advises taking the test if you are 65 years or older, have a family history of Alzheimer’s disease, are experiencing mild cognitive impairment, or have experienced past brain trauma or head injury. The company says the test is an initial screening that focuses on early detection of risk. It does not give a definitive diagnosis.

This is how it works: You buy the test online and a telehealth doctor then reviews the purchase and places an order for you. You then visit a local Quest Diagnostics lab for a blood draw. You can read your test results online, share them with your doctor, or have the option to speak with one of their affiliated doctors when your results are in.

The test has not been cleared or approved by the FDA, and the Alzheimer’s Association does not endorse it at this time, citing a lack of data.

“We challenge Quest to pursue a path of FDA approval that demonstrates,

Because there are no medications to prevent symptoms, some experts question the usefulness of the test. Michael Racke, Quest's medical director of neurology, has said people can take a more proactive approach to their health after learning their risk.

A physical therapist at Holy Cross Rio Vista Rehabilitation Center works with a patient. (Holy Cross Health/Courtesy)

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## New South Florida choices for physical therapy

Recovering from an fall, surgery or other injury? South Florida has a few new offerings for physical therapy.

**Holy Cross Health** has opened the Holy Cross Rehabilitation Institute of Rio Vista. The physical therapy clinic previously on Federal Highway in Fort Lauderdale relocated to a new, upgraded facility on Davie Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale. It is one of seven physical therapy centers Holy Cross operates in Broward County. The center treat sports medicine injuries, balance conditions, gait dysfunction as well as concussion rehab.

In addition, a new partnership wants to make it easier for people in South Florida to get physical therapy at home.

**Memorial Healthcare System**, which has a large South Broward presence, has partnered with Luna, a national physical therapy clinic, to expand its outpatient, in-home physical therapy services. Instead of coming to the hospital, Luna's physical therapist provide one-on-one care in people's home, seven days a week.

Patients in Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties can search Luna's online portal to find and book a physical therapist based on specialty, geography and time availability. The same therapist treats the patient for their entire treatment time. Additionally, patients and therapists can communicate and discuss care needs between visits using the Luna platform.

Palm Beach County has a new option, too.

**HCA Florida JFK Hospital** has opened a new state-of-the-art inpatient physical rehabilitation center. The center has 42 beds and is aimed at people recovering from orthopedic injuries, acute cardiac conditions, neurological disorders, stroke, and spinal cord injuries. Within the center, patients have access to a therapy gym and a

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The care team at the new rehabilitation center includes physicians, specially trained rehabilitation nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, dieticians, and a diabetic educator.

## **University of Miami pioneers a new healthcare concept for busy women**

Many women who are juggling personal, family and career commitments don't make time for their own health care. Recognizing this work-life struggle, UHealth is pioneering a new "one-stop" [Comprehensive Women's Health Alliance](#).

In this program, South Florida women fill out an online questionnaire about their health issues and concerns, and then connect with a nurse navigator. The navigator helps to get them appointments with specialists in areas such as gynecology, urogynecology, gastroenterology, breast health, bone health, behavioral health, dermatology care, and nutrition services. The program's nurse navigators also will expedite referrals to other UHealth specialists if needed.

"Rather than spending hours online or on the phone making appointments with multiple physicians, our nurse coordinator helps busy women access preventive screenings, diagnostic assessments and referrals to specialists who understand women's special health issues," said Dr. Laura Martin, a gynecologist with a subspecialty in urogynecology and co-director of the new program. Martin explained the benefits of the new program in [UHealth's Medical Newsletter](#). To reach a nurse navigator call 855-34-WOMEN.

Broward Health nurse and new mother Kaitlyn Desmond donated breast milk to the Milk Bank Depot at Broward Health Coral Springs. (Broward Health/Courtesy)

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## **Broward nurse and mother donates breast milk to new Milk Bank Depot**

A Neonatal Intensive Care Unit nurse at Broward Health Coral Springs has donated 450 ounces of breast milk to the Milk Bank Depot at Broward Health Coral Springs in observance of National Breastfeeding Month.

Kaitlyn Desmond has provided care to the smallest patients in the NICU at Broward Health and said she sees the importance of breast milk in neonatal care plans. Breast milk can help curb chronic illnesses for premature babies. Desmond just gave birth to her first child. Since becoming a Milk Bank Depot in February 2022, Broward Health Coral Springs has received more than 40,000 ounces of breast milk for the Mother's Milk Bank of Florida.

*What's Hot in Healthcare is a monthly feature of the South Florida Sun Sentinel. To submit content, contact health reporter Cindy Goodman at [cgoodman@sunsentinel.com](mailto:cgoodman@sunsentinel.com).*

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