

Psychological Experiences of Women with Breast Cancer after Passing through the Critical Stage; a Qualitative Study

Khansari F: Department of Medical Ethics and Law, Breast Cancer Research Center of the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research, Tehran, Iran

Saeedinejad Y: Department of Medical Ethics and Law, Breast Cancer Research Center of the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research, Tehran, Iran

Raofi A: Department of Medical Ethics and Law, Breast Cancer Research Center of the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research, Tehran, Iran

Shamsi Gooshki E: Medical Ethics and History of Medicine Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran & Department of Medical Ethics and Law, Breast Cancer Research Center of the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research, Tehran, Iran

Corresponding Author: Azam Raofi, parastoorafee@gmail.com

Abstract

Introduction: Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women around the world, and the survival rate for patients greatly depends on their quality of life, which is in turn determined by their psychological experiences. The present study thus focuses on investigating psychological experiences among women with breast cancer.

Methods: This research is a content analysis qualitative study, based on semi-open and semi-structured interviews. The participants comprised of 15 patients with breast cancer, undergoing chemotherapy or follow-up treatments after their mastectomy, who had visited the Breast Cancer Research Center of the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (BCRC, ACECR) at the time of the research. None of the patients had distant metastasis and the disease was controlled. We have selected this group of patients because they are passing through the critical stage of facing with the bad news, spending many levels of their disease treatment, and achieving stability in the disease situation. After permission, the participants were interviewed with the open and unbiased questions in a relaxed atmosphere away from confounding factors and in an empty room of the clinic. The interview with each participant lasted 30 minutes and the participants orally allowed us to record the interview. The results were analyzed after several reviewing the transcript of the interview.

Results: The participants were 36 to 72 years old, and their education backgrounds ranged from illiteracy to bachelor's degree. All patients were married and had 1 to 3 children. After being diagnosed with breast cancer, some patients felt anger or sadness, and they generally emphasized on the necessity of emotional supports from their families to face the diagnosis results. Some participants did not view cancer as a disaster, and a majority of them did not wish they had not been affected with by cancer, while most of them contemplated about their death every night.

Conclusion: The results of the study depicted that while most patients experienced anger or sadness when they were informed about their cancer diagnosis, they had accepted the disease and its side effects through time, in a manner that most patients had coped with dramatic changes in their body image as a result of mastectomy, and did not recall it as a negative experience. It seemed that time could gradually change psychological experiences among cancerous patients.

Keywords: Breast Neoplasms; Body Image, Psychological Experiences.