

## The Effects of Fearing Cancer in Women

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**Abstract :** Introduction: The literature has demonstrated that individual and psychological factors have a direct effect on the perceptions and attitudes of women with cancer. Objectives: To investigate the relationship between the fear of cancer and anxiety. Aim: To examine the impact of the fear of cancer in women with state and trait anxiety of women. Methods: A community sample of 286 women (mean age 39.6 years, SD = 9.5 ranged 20-60) participated in the current study. The women completed a) State - Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and b) questionnaire concerning socio-demographic information and questions for fear of cancer. Results: The perception of fear in women with cancer is statistically independent from their age (t-test,  $p = 0.58$ ), their family status ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p = 0.519$ ), their place of residency ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p = 0.148$ ), the manifestation of gynecological cancer ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p = 0.979$ ) or the manifestation of any type of cancer in the family ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p = 0.277$ ). In contrast, it was observed that there was a dependence in relation to a total of phobias ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), the fear of illness ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the fear of heights ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Furthermore, the participants that responded that they feared cancer displayed greater level of stress both as situation ( $t = -3.462$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) and as a trait of their personality ( $t = -4.377$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and at the same time they displayed greater levels of depression in comparisons with the other participants. Furthermore, following multiple linear regression analysis it was observed that the participants that responded positively to the question if they feared cancer had 8,3 units greater stress level as a personality trait in comparison to women that responded negatively to the question if they feared cancer ( $B = 8.3$ ;  $p = 0.016$ ;  $R^2 = 0.506$ ). Conclusion: Women's fear of cancer is statistically independent from their age, family status, place of residency, the manifestation of gynaecological cancer and with the manifestation of cancer any type in the family. In contrast, there is a dependency with the total of phobias, fear of illness and fear of heights. Women that state that they have a fear of cancer manifest greater levels of stress from the rest of the participants both as situation and as a trait of their personality ( $p = 0.001$  and  $p < 0.001$  accordingly). In specific, the study demonstrated that the participants that responded positively to the question if they feared cancer had 8,3 units greater stress level as a personality trait in comparison to women that responded negatively.

**Keywords :** fear, women health, anxiety, psychology, cancer

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