

The Implication of Small Group Therapy on Sexuality in Breast Cancer Survivors

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Abstract : Introduction: The incidence of breast cancer has gradually increased in Taiwan, and the characteristic of younger ages impact these women in their middle age, and may also cause challenges in terms of family, work, and illness. Breasts are symbols of femininity, as well as of sex. For women, breasts are important organs for the female identity and sexual expression. Losing breasts not only affects the female role, but would also affect sexual attraction and sexual desire. Thus, women with breast cancer who have need for mastectomies experience physical incompleteness, which affects women's self-confidence, physical image, and self-orientation. Purposes: 1. To understand the physical experience of women with breast cancer. 2. To explore the issue of sexual issues on the health effects of women with breast cancer. 3. To construct a domestic sex life issue group model for domestic women with breast cancer. 4. To explore the accompaniment experiences and sexual relationship adjustments of spouses when women have breast cancer. Method: After the research plan passes IRB review, participants will be recruited at breast surgery clinic in the affiliated hospital, to screen suitable subjects for entry into the group. Between March and May 2015, two sexual health and sex life consultation groups were conducted, which were (1) 10 in postoperative groups for women with cancer; (2) 4 married couples group for postoperative women with cancer. After sharing experiences and dialogue, women can achieve mutual support and growth. Data organization and analysis underwent descriptive analysis in qualitative research, and the group process was transcribed into transcripts for overall-content and category-content analysis. Results: Ten women with breast cancer believed that participating in group can help them exchange experiences, and elevate sexual health. The main issues include: (1) after breast cancer surgery, patients generally received chemotherapy or estrogen suppressants, causing early menopause; in particular, vaginal dryness can cause pain or bleeding in intercourse, reducing their desire for sexual activity; (2) breast cancer accentuates original spousal or family and friend relationships; some people have support and care from their family, and spouses emphasize health over the appearance of breasts; however, some people do not have acceptance and support from their family, and some even hear spousal sarcasm about loss of breasts; (3) women with breast cancer have polarized expressions of optimism and pessimism in regards to their emotions, beliefs, and body image regarding cancer; this is related to the women's original personalities, attribution of causes of cancer, and extent of worry about relapse. Conclusion: The research results can be provided as a reference to medical institutions or breast cancer volunteer teams, to pay attention to maintaining the health of women with breast cancer.

Keywords : women with breast cancer, experiences of objectifying the body, quality of sex life, sexual health

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