

The Impact of Breast Cancer Diagnosis on Omani Women

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Abstract : Breast cancer is the most common cancer among females worldwide. It is also the most common cancer among females in Oman with 100 new breast cancer cases diagnosed every year. It has been found that breast cancer have a devastating effect on women's life. Women diagnosed with breast cancer might develop negative attitudes towards the illness and their bodies. They might also suffer from psychological ailments such as depression. Despite the evidence on the impact of breast cancer diagnosis on women, there was no study found to explore the impact of breast cancer diagnosis among women in Oman. A phenomenological qualitative study was conducted to explore the impact of breast cancer diagnosis on Omani women. Data was collected through semi-structured individual interviews with 11 Omani women diagnosed with breast cancer. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and data were analyzed thematically. From the data, there are four main themes identified in relation to the impact of cancer diagnosis on Omani women. These are 'shock and disbelieve', 'a death sentence', "uncertain future" and "social stigma". At the time of interviews, all participants had advanced breast cancer with some participants having metastatic disease. The impact of the word "cancer" had a profound and catastrophic effect on the women and their close relatives. In conclusion, breast cancer diagnosis was shocking and mainly perceived as a death sentence by Omani women with uncertain future and social stigma. Regardless of age, maternal status and education level, it is evident that Omani women participated in this study lacked awareness about breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and prognosis.

Keywords : breast cancer, coping, diagnosis, Oman, women

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