

An Assessment of Sexual Informational Needs of Breast Cancer Patients in Radiation Oncology

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Abstract : Background and Purpose: Research regarding the sexual impact of breast cancer treatment on Asian women is both sensitive and scarce. This study aims to assess and evaluate the sexual health needs and concerns of breast cancer radiotherapy patients. It is hoped that awareness will be increased and an appropriate intervention can be developed to address the needs of future breast cancer patients. Methods: 110 consecutive unselected breast cancer patients were recruited prospectively. Questionnaires were administered once for patient undergoing radiotherapy to the breast. This study employed an anonymous questionnaire; any breast radiotherapy patient who can read English can voluntarily receive and complete the survey. The questionnaire consisted of items addressing demographics, potential informational needs, and educational preferences. Results: Patients' interest to address sexual concerns decreases with age ($p=0.024$). Coherently, sexual concerns of patients are reported to decrease with age ($p=0.015$) where 70% of all respondents below age 50 [age 20-29 (60%); 30-39 (56.3%); 40-49(55.1%)] have started to have sexual concerns regarding their treatment effects on their sexual health. Patients who underwent breast conservation surgery (42.2%) and reconstruction surgery (83.3%) were more likely to have concerns about sexual health versus patients who underwent mastectomy (36.7%) ($p=0.032$). 74.2% of patients with sexual concern regardless of age would initiate conversation with their healthcare providers ($p < 0.001$). Conclusions: The results showed a staggering interest of female patients wanting information on this area which would not only boost their confidence and body image but also address concerns of the effect of breast radiotherapy on sexual health during their treatment.

Keywords : breast cancer, breast radiotherapy, sexual health, sexual impact

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