Trajectories of Depression Anxiety and Stress among Breast Cancer Patients: Assessment at First Year of Diagnosis

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Abstract : Little information is available about the development of psychological well being over time among women who have been undergoing treatment for breast cancer. The aim of this study was to identify the trajectories of depression anxiety and stress among women with early-stage breast cancer. Of the 48 Indian women with newly diagnosed early-stage breast cancer recruited from surgical oncology unit, 39 completed an interview and were assessed for depression anxiety and stress (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-DASS 21) before their first course of chemotherapy (baseline) and follow up interviews at 3, 6 and 9 months thereafter. Growth mixture modeling was used to identify distinct trajectories of Depression Anxiety and Stress symptoms. Logistic Regression analysis was used to evaluate the characteristics of women in distinct groups. Most women showed mild to moderate level of depression and anxiety (68%) while normal to mild level of stress (71%). But one in 11 women was chronically anxious (9%) and depressed (9%). Young age, having a partner, shorter education and receiving chemotherapy but not radiotherapy might characterize women whose psychological symptoms remain strong nine months after diagnosis. By looking beyond the mean, it was found that several socio-demographic and treatment factors characterized the women whose depression, anxiety and stress level remained severe even nine months after diagnosis. The results suggest that support provided to cancer patients should have a special focus on a relatively small group of patient most in need.
Keywords : psychological well being, growth mixture modeling, logistic regression analysis, socio-demographic factors
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