

Information-Seeking Behaviors of Women With Breast Cancer

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Purpose/Objectives: To explore the information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer.

Design: Sequential, between-methods triangulation.

Setting: Community-based.

Sample: 156 women with breast cancer took part in a mailed survey, and 30 women with breast cancer participated in three focus group discussions (n = 11, 12, and 7).

Methods: Women with breast cancer completed the Miller Behavioral Style Scale (MBSS). Other women with breast cancer participated in one of three age-stratified focus group discussions.

Main Research Variable: Information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer.

Findings: The information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer, as measured by the monitoring subscale of MBSS, were not significantly associated with their demographic (e.g., age, socioeconomic class) and illness-related characteristics (e.g., months since diagnosis, surgery, therapeutic regimens). The focus group discussions suggested that the information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer were highly individualistic. Although some women actively sought information, others avoided information. In addition, women sometimes fluctuated between seeking and avoiding information. Women sought information to cope with breast cancer, regain a sense of control, increase their feelings of confidence, and help facilitate the decision-making process. Women avoided information to escape from worry, fear, and feelings of negativity and depression.

Conclusions: The information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer are highly individualistic and are not related to demographic or disease-related characteristics.

Implications for Nursing Practice: Breast-care nurses need to be sensitive to the information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer. Information seekers should be given maximum information, and information avoiders should be given minimum information. In addition, more research needs to be conducted into the information-seeking behaviors of women with the disease.

Key Points . . .

- ▶ The demographic and illness-related characteristics of women with breast cancer do not appear to be associated with their information-seeking behaviors.
- ▶ The information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer are highly individualistic, with some women wanting information, others avoiding information, and many women fluctuating between information seeking and information avoiding.
- ▶ Women seek information to cope with cancer, regain a sense of control over the cancer experience, increase their feelings of confidence, and participate in the decision-making process. They avoid information to escape from negative feelings they associate with attending to information.
- ▶ Oncology nurses need to take into consideration the information-seeking behaviors of women with breast cancer when providing them with information about the disease.

1996; Cooley et al., 1995; Hagopian, 1996; Luker et al., 1995). Information also has been found to lower anxiety and distress (Marteau, Kidd, Cuddeford, & Walker, 1996; Meredith et al., 1996; Michie, Rosebert, Heaversedge, Madden, & Parbhoo, 1996) and facilitate the process of coping with breast cancer (Cameron et al., 1994; Harrison-Woermke & Graydon, 1993; Shaw, Wilson, & O'Brien, 1994).

Several studies have assessed the information needs of women with breast cancer (Bilodeau & Degner, 1996; Cawley, Kostic, & Cappello, 1990; Degner et al., 1997; Galloway et al., 1997; Graydon et al., 1997; Harrison-Woermke & Graydon, 1993; Luker et al., 1995; Luker, Beaver, Leinster, & Owens, 1996). These studies indicated that women have distinct information needs throughout their breast cancer journeys (Rees & Bath, 2000a). Around diagnosis, women want information

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women in the United Kingdom (UK) (Austoker, 1994). In the UK, the incidence of breast cancer among women age 50 approaches 2 per 1,000 women per year with more than 14,000 deaths annually (McPherson, Steel & Dixon, 2000). In the United States, an estimated 192,200 new cases will be diagnosed this year alone and 40,200 women will die of breast cancer (Greenlee, Hill-Harmon, Murray, & Thun, 2001). Information has been found to be a necessary prerequisite to informed decision-making (Bilodeau & Degner,

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