RESEARCH BRIEF

Anxiety and PTSD Symptoms During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Women With Breast Cancer

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OBJECTIVES: To examine (a) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms and (b) the impact of socioeconomic factors on COVID-19–related anxiety and PTSD symptoms.

SAMPLE & SETTING: Women with early-stage invasive breast cancer who were receiving chemotherapy in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio.

METHODS & VARIABLES: Baseline study variables included economic hardship, interpersonal relationships, and perceived stress. PTSD and anxiety symptoms were collected in June 2020 (T1) and February 2021 (T2). Group comparisons were made using paired-sample t tests, analysis of variance, and Pearson correlations.

RESULTS: There were 88 women at T1 and 64 women at T2. At T1, PTSD symptom scores were significantly associated with less interpersonal support, greater economic hardship, and greater perceived stress. Anxiety scores were associated with perceived stress. At T2, anxiety scores were still associated with perceived stress. However, PTSD symptom scores were no longer associated with interpersonal support, economic hardship, or perceived stress.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING: Anxiety and PTSD symptom measurement during a global pandemic is needed to identify vulnerable patients with breast cancer who need targeted support and emergency guidance in nursing practice.

KEYWORDS COVID-19; breast cancer; anxiety; PTSD symptoms

ONF, 49(3), 201–205.

DOI 10.1188/22.ONF.201-205