

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Post-Treatment Symptoms Among Ethnic Minority Breast Cancer Survivors

Rani Eversley, PhD, Diane Estrin, BS, Suzanne Dibble, DNSc, RN, Linda Wardlaw, DrPH, Maria Pedrosa, MA, and Wendy Favila-Penney, BA

Purpose/Objectives: To determine racial and ethnic differences in the range and number of post-treatment symptoms among women who have undergone surgical and postsurgical treatment for breast cancer.

Design: Retrospective study.

Setting: Community-based social services agency and public health clinic.

Methods: Face-to-face interview of 116 women who had undergone breast cancer surgery.

Sample: Primarily low-income women in an urban area in northern California. Participants were recruited via posted flyers regarding the study.

Main Research Variables: Outcomes (depression, fatigue, pain, and swelling from lymphedema) and demographics (ethnicity, age, income, insurance, education, and marital status).

Findings: The typical participant was 47 years old, had 12 years of education, and was a parent (74%), unmarried (67%), heterosexual (88%), uninsured (68%), and employed (66%). Thirty percent were Caucasian, 30% African American, 25% Latina, and 15% women of other ethnic backgrounds. African American women and Latinas reported increased rates of pain and an increased number of symptoms. Latinas also reported higher rates of fatigue and depression. In multivariate analyses, an increased number of symptoms were associated with decreased income, with receiving chemotherapy, with having a mastectomy, and with Latina ethnicity.

Conclusions: These data suggest an increased rate of post-treatment symptoms experienced by low-income and ethnic minority women.

Implications for Nursing: A need exists for affordable, culturally appropriate symptom management interventions. Nursing will have a vital role in designing, testing, and offering such interventions.

Key Points . . .

- Increased levels of post-treatment symptoms exist among minorities.
- Increased levels of symptoms also are associated with decreased income.
- Affordable symptom management is indicated.

Goal for CE Enrollees:

To examine the racial and ethnic differences in the range and number of post-treatment symptoms of breast cancer survivors.

Objectives for CE Enrollees:

1. Examine the relationship among surgical treatments, adjuvant therapies, and post-treatment symptoms in a multi-ethnic (Caucasian, African American, and Latina) sample of breast cancer survivors.
2. Identify the proportions of women reporting symptoms in each ethnic group.
3. Discuss the independent associates of reporting multiple symptoms.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, with 211,240 new invasive cases expected in 2005 (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2005). However, death rates have declined since the 1990s, with the largest decline in younger women (ACS, 2004). Overall five-year relative survival rates from the time of diagnosis are now 97% for localized disease, 79% for regional stage, and 23% for metastatic breast cancer (ACS, 2004). However, only 74% of African American women survive for five years, compared with 88% of Caucasian women (ACS, 2004). These statistics indicate a need to address disparities in survival as well as quality of life among breast cancer survivors.

Post-treatment symptoms, including fatigue, depression, cognitive difficulties, pain, and nausea, are common among women who have undergone treatment for breast cancer (Carpenter et al., 1999; Kakuda, Stuntz, Trivedi, Klein, & Vargas, 1999; Overgard, 2000; Shank, Moughan, Owen, Wilson, & Hanks,

Rani Eversley, PhD, is an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF); Diane Estrin, BS, was the director at the Women's Cancer Resource Center in Berkeley, CA, at the time this article was written; Suzanne Dibble, DNSc, RN, is an adjunct professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at UCSF; Linda Wardlaw, DrPH, is the grants manager at the Charlotte Maxwell Community Clinic in Oakland, CA; Maria Pedrosa, MA, is a research assistant at the Women's Cancer Resource Center and UCSF; and Wendy Favila-Penney, BA, is the director at the Alameda County Cancer Navigator in Oakland. This study was funded by a California Breast Cancer Research Program Community Research Collaborative Award (Project # 7BB-1500). (Submitted September 2003. Accepted for publication July 14, 2004.)

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/05.ONF.250-256