



Informational Needs of Postmastectomy Patients

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study was to determine informational needs of postmastectomy patients.

Materials and Methods: This descriptive study was conducted in the general surgery clinics of a university health center for medical research and practice with 72 voluntary patients. For data collection, a patient identification form was used, which was prepared by the researchers in accordance with the literature.

Results: The mean age of the patients was 52.66 ± 13.39 years, 87% were married, 58% had primary school education, 76% had moderate economic status, and 53% had undergone simple mastectomy.

It was determined that 83% of the patients wanted to be informed about hospital and home care interventions, 82% about symptoms and prevention of post-surgical problems, 76% regarding breast cancer and treatment options, and in the range of 54-68%, patients wanted information on the effects of surgery on the body, shoulder and arm exercises, breast self-examination, the effects of breast cancer on family and work life, lymphedema and prevention interventions.

Conclusion: We recommend that patients with mastectomy should be informed about topics including care interventions, breast cancer and treatment options, effects of surgery, and reducing these effects.

Keywords: Breast cancer, informational needs, nursing care, mastectomy

Introduction

A complex disease that affects women both physically and psychologically, breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in women (1). According to data from the Health Statistics Yearbook 2013, breast cancer is the most common cancer type in women in Turkey, and its incidence in 2011 was 45.1 per hundred thousand (2, 3). Surgical treatment is one of the most frequently used treatment options for breast cancer. Mastectomy is often chosen as the treatment option in Turkey (4).

Mastectomy, removal of breast tissue partially or completely, creates physiologic, psychological, and social problems in patients (5). Infection, pain, phantom breast syndrome, seroma, hematoma, lymphedema, and frozen shoulder syndrome are amongst the important complications (3, 6). Additionally, mastectomy affects women negatively in terms of body image, self-esteem and dyadic adjustment, causes sexual dysfunction, and leads to psychosocial problems such as anxiety and social isolation (7-10).

Patients' educational needs should be determined and sufficient information should be provided in order to prevent problems that occur in patients who undergo surgical intervention because of breast cancer, ensure patients' adaptation, and speed up the healing process (5). Educating patients and their families is an inseparable part of nursing care. Previous studies concluded that educating breast cancer patients improved their self-care behaviors, diminished anxiety, had a positive effect on their emotions and attitudes, helped them prepare for the future, strengthened their ability to cope with treatment and adverse effects, increased their quality of life, decreased symptoms, and the need of postoperative analgesia and duration of hospital stay while maintaining patient satisfaction (11-15).

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Table 1. The patients' personal characteristics

Mean Age (years)		52.66±13.39	
Marital Status	Married	63	87.5
	Single	9	12.5
Education Status	Primary Education	42	58.3
	Secondary Education	22	30.6
	Bachelor's Degree	8	11.1
Level of Economic Status	Low	16	22.2
	Moderate	55	76.4
	High	1	1.4
Applied Surgical Intervention	Simple Mastectomy	38	52.8
	Radical Mastectomy	25	34.7
	Modified Radical Mastectomy	9	12.5

Table 2. The topics of the patients' informational needs

The topics of informational needs	n	%
Postoperative hospital and home care practices	60	83.3
Symptoms and prevention of postoperative problems	59	81.9
Breast cancer and treatment options	55	76.4
The effects of surgery on the body	49	68.1
Shoulder and arm exercises	45	62.5
Breast self-examination	41	56.9
Effects of breast cancer on domestic and occupational life	40	55.6
Lymphedema and interventions for its prevention	39	54.2
Breast reconstruction	20	27.8

The relevant literature states that patients with breast cancer have a high demand for information (16, 17). In a study by Findik (18), it was found that patients who underwent surgical intervention because of breast cancer were in great need for information; however, this need was very rarely met. Batte and Odoi-Adome (19) reported that 41% of patients did not receive satisfactory information regarding treatment, and Gül and Erdim (20) reported that nurses frequently educated patients with breast cancer regarding lymphedema; however, the education content was flawed and patients were not provided with thorough education. Understanding patients' informational needs makes nurses more competent in helping patients cope with treatment and adverse effects, and diminishes anxiety and problems (13, 21).

The aim of this study was to determine the subjects about which patients undergoing mastectomy need to be informed.

Materials and Methods

This descriptive study was conducted in the general surgery clinics of a university's health center for medical research and practice. The re-

quired research ethics committee approval (Trakya University, School of Medicine, Scientific Research Ethics Committee, decision number: 05/05, 2013/6) and institutional approval (Trakya University, Health Research and Application Center, Central Management) were obtained. In order to determine the sample number, power analysis was conducted in accordance with the literature with a margin of error of 0.05, tolerance rate parameter not exceeding 5%, 90% power; N=72 volunteer patients. A data collection form was prepared and used by the researchers to gather data in accordance with the literature. This form included the patients' personal variables (Table 1) and the main topics of the information that should be delivered to patients undergoing mastectomy (Table 2). The patients whose treatment continued post-mastectomy in the clinic were visited in their rooms and informed about the purpose of the study. Verbal consent was received from the patients who voluntarily participated in the study. The data collection forms were completed using the face-to-face interview method.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis of this study was performed with descriptive analyses on SPSS 19.0. The data analysis involved numbers, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Results

We found that the patients' mean age was 52.66±13.39 years, 87% were married, 58% had elementary school education, 76% were of average economic status, and 53% had undergone simple mastectomy surgery (Table 1). Of the patients, 83% conveyed that they wanted to be informed about the post-operative hospital and home care practices, 82% about the symptoms and prevention of post-operative problems, 76% about breast cancer and treatment options, and 54% to 68% of the patients wanted to know about the effects of surgery on the body, shoulder and arm exercises, breast self-exam, effects of breast cancer on the domestic and occupational life, and lymphedema and interventions for its prevention. The topic the patients wanted to be informed about the least was breast reconstruction with 28% (Table 2).

Discussion and Conclusions

We determined that the patients in this study most wanted to be informed about post-operative care practices in hospital and at home (83.3%), and the symptoms and prevention of post-operative problems (81.9%). Mohamed and El-Sebaee (17) found that patients who had undergone modified radical mastectomy wanted information regarding breast cancer and preventive, regenerative, and care practices after its treatment, whereas Schmidt et al. (22) discovered that patients post mastectomy mostly required information about care practices and how to cope with adverse effects. In conclusion, patients who undergo mastectomy require information about care practices, complications and their prevention.

Seventy-six percent of the patients stated that they wanted information regarding breast cancer and its treatment options. Findik (18) reported patients who underwent mastectomy primarily needed information about the medication, whereas Jenkins et al. (23) reported patients wanted to know about treatment options and their adverse effects. Li et al. (24) discovered the subject patients with breast cancer most wanted to know about was breast cancer metastasis and the chances of recovery. These studies show that patients with breast cancer want to be informed about breast cancer and its treatment.

The patients in our study wished to know about the effects of surgery on the body, shoulder and arm exercises, breast self-exam, the effects of

breast cancer on domestic and occupational life, and lymphedema at varying rates (54% to 68%). Schmid-Büchi et al. (25) found that patients who received breast cancer treatment predominantly needed to be informed about supportive care in daily life. Evsine (26) concluded that female patients with breast cancer wanted nurses to inform them about the prevention, treatment, and care of lymphedema. Abdollahzadeh et al. (27) reported that according to patients, the primary topics of information needed were the effects of the disease on daily life and physical condition. Salminen et al. (28) stated that patients most needed information on the disease and its effects on daily life after being diagnosed as having breast cancer, and they were not satisfied with the way their needs were met. These findings prove that patients with breast cancer wish to be comprehensively informed about various topics.

The patients in our study revealed that they wanted information on points that would affect their lives post mastectomy in an extensive and comprehensive manner. We recommend that nursing care of patients undergoing mastectomy should include information of hospital and home care practices, breast cancer and treatment options, the effects of surgery on the body, shoulder and arm exercises, breast self-examination, effects of breast cancer on the domestic and occupational life, and lymphedema.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval was received for this study from Trakya University School of Medicine, Scientific Research Ethics Committee, decision number: 05/05, 2013/6.

Informed Consent: Verbal informed consent was obtained from patients who participated in this study.

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