Preserving sexual function in breast cancer survivorship: Does surgical modality matter?

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Background

• Surgery for breast cancer may affect the role of the breasts in intimacy, manifesting as sexual dysfunction.
• We analyze whether there are associations between surgery type, postoperative comfort with one’s appearance and partner, and the impact on sexual function.
• This is an updated study with a larger cohort, based on previous analysis.

Methods

• Prospective anonymous survey.
• English speaking breast cancer patients >18 years old.
• Surgery between 2000 – 2014.
• Sexual dysfunction assessed by Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI).
• Categorical variables compared by Chi-square and continuous variables by Wilcoxon rank-sum test.

Results

• 396 patients included in final analysis.
• Overall 77.5% in a relationship.
• 70.7% sexually active.
• Overall post-op sexual dysfunction rate of 45.4%.
• Non-significantly lower FSFI scores in the mastectomy without reconstruction (M) group with highest scores in the mastectomy with reconstruction group (MR) (Figure 1.)

Conclusions

• Patients who were comfortable with their partner scored better (Table 1).
• Those who found the chest important for intimacy scored better and had less sexual dysfunction, p =0.02 (Table 1).
• Those who had less pleasure with caress had worse scores and more significant sexual dysfunction, p = 0.009 (Table 1).

Figure 1. Overall FSFI scores with no significant difference between surgery groups.

Table 1. Overall FSFI scores among those who reported sexual activity in the past 4 weeks and who had fewer than 8 zero responses, related to post-operative outcomes (overall). Sexual dysfunction indicated by a score <26.55.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied with appearance of chest after surgery</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>FSFI Median</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>IQR (Interquartile range)</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>FSFI dysfunction (≥26) n (%)</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable with partner seeing chest after surgery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>9.5 – 36.0</td>
<td>21.9 – 31.6</td>
<td>p = 0.004</td>
<td>59 (41.5)</td>
<td>p = 0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>7.2 – 31.4</td>
<td>16.7 – 26.2</td>
<td>p = 0.004</td>
<td>11 (46.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>13.0 – 35.7</td>
<td>20.5 – 29.2</td>
<td>p = 0.004</td>
<td>14 (58.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>9.5 – 36.0</td>
<td>22.0 – 31.6</td>
<td>p = 0.004</td>
<td>51 (39.2)</td>
<td>p = 0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>7.2 – 34.8</td>
<td>18.7 – 29.2</td>
<td>p = 0.004</td>
<td>32 (59.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasurable to have treated breast caressed</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>15.3 – 36.0</td>
<td>23.8 – 32.8</td>
<td>p = 0.002</td>
<td>25 (37.0)</td>
<td>p = 0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>11.3 – 35.2</td>
<td>21.4 – 30.6</td>
<td>18 (37.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>7.2 – 31.3</td>
<td>15.5 – 25.9</td>
<td>12 (80.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References