POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS AND FEAR OF PROGRESSION SYMPTOMS IN BREAST CANCER PATIENTS COMPARING STAGE, THE USE OF ADJUVANT CHEMOTHERAPY, AND BREAST CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

Background
Prior studies have demonstrated the psychological impact of a breast cancer (BC) diagnosis on women, however, few have examined the presence of post-traumatic stress (PTS) and fear of progression (FOP) symptoms in BC patients based on pathologic stage, modalities of treatment, and surgical approach (mastectomy vs breast conservation).

Methods
In this IRB approved study, patients treated for BC by a single surgeon from 2006-2015 were eligible and completed Fear of Progression SF-12 and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Civilian PCL-C questionnaires. Patients were excluded if they were deceased, inmates, spoke non-English as a primary language, had a history of mental illness, diagnosis of other malignancy, or had Stage IV disease. FOP and PTS symptoms frequency and severity were compared based on age at diagnosis, adjuvant therapy, and surgical approach. Results were analyzed with two sample t test with p values <0.05 being significant.

RESULTS

Of 205 BC patients, 50 were excluded, and questionnaires were successfully provided to 92 patients with a 70% response rate. The mean age at diagnosis of BC respondents was 52(±12) years. Mean time since diagnosis was 43 months (range 3-132). Thirteen percent of patients had ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). Of those with invasive disease, 48% were stage I, 28% stage II, and 9% stage III. Respondents reported a mean of 5.1 out of 12 FOP symptoms (43%) and 2.6 out of 17 PTS symptoms (15%). The most common PTS symptoms was “hyper-arousal”; however, the category with the greatest symptoms severity was “effortful avoidance”. Patients under age 50 experienced significantly more symptoms of FOP and PTS as well as greater symptoms severity in FOP and PTS. Patients reported a significant deterioration during the 7-12 month period in both FOP and PTS symptoms compared to the 0-6 month period. The symptoms beyond one year showed a trend toward improvement; frequency and severity were statistically similar regardless of stage, surgical approach, and the use of adjuvant chemotherapy.

DISCUSSION

Patients diagnosed with breast cancer are affected psychologically, however, FOP and PTS symptoms were similar regardless of:
- Stage
- Prognosis
- Mastectomy vs breast conservation
- Adjuvant chemotherapy treatment

Younger patients under the age of 55 experienced more FOP and PTS symptoms, as well as greater symptom severity, than those over age 55.

Patients experienced deterioration in the 7-12 month range, which was associated with significant FOP and PTS symptoms.

REFERENCES