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Young Survivors of Breast Cancer Report Sexual Quality of Life Declines After Treatment

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Cancer therapy decreases the sexual quality of life in young breast cancer survivors, and its impact extends beyond just disease symptoms and treatment-related adverse events (AEs), according to a study published in *Supportive Care in Cancer*.

The negative effects of treatment among women with **breast cancer** is well documented; patients experience a wide range of physical, emotional, mental, social, and sexual AEs. Previous findings report however, that of the 85% of patients who experience sexual dysfunction, only 41% of the 68% who desire more information receive it.

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For this study, researchers analyzed the survey results of 43 young breast cancer survivors whose initial diagnosis was made between ages 20 and 35. Patients completed 2 questionnaires assessing quality of sexual life — the Brief Index of Sexual Functioning for Women (BISF-W) and Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) — at least 6 months postdiagnosis. Additional questionnaires evaluating patient sexual satisfaction prior to cancer and quality of sexual life since treatment were completed.

Results showed that more than half of study participants experienced negative effects in their sexual quality of life.

Patients had a mean score of 28.08 out of 75 on the BISF-W, and experienced significant declines in arousal and pleasure compared with a control group found in literature. Patients had a mean FSFI score of 25.1; more than 55% of participants had a score under the cutoff of 26.55. The domains most affected according to the FSFI were desire and orgasm.

Further analysis revealed that while half of patients desired to receive follow-up for sexual disturbance during cancer treatment, only 7% received it.

The authors concluded that “a real offset exists between women asking for a sexuality follow-up and medical inclusion. This study confirms to practitioners how approaching sexuality is inseparable of global care. The place of consultation, by a general practitioner, gynecologist, or oncologist, to discuss sexual health and address sexual trouble is essential.”



Half of patients desired to receive follow-up for sexual disturbance during cancer treatment, but only 7% reported receiving it.

Reference

Blouet A, Zinger M, Capitain O, et al. [Sexual quality of life evaluation after treatment among women with breast cancer under 35 years old](#)[published online August 16, 2018]. *Support Care Cancer*. doi: 10.1007/s00520-018-4374-z

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