

Experience of the Young Women with Early Stage Breast Cancer: A Qualitative Study

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The cells in the breast begin to grow out of control is called as breast cancer. This is classified into stage zero to stage four according to the amount of severity and nature of spread. During early stage, diagnosis of the cancer and beginning of treatments are directly affected to quality of life of young women. Most of women have unpleasant physical, psychological, and sociocultural experience due to impairments and functional limitation secondary to breast cancer. Purpose of this study was to explore experiences of young women with early stage breast cancer at oncology unit in Provincial General Hospital Kurunegala. A phenomenological design was carried out to explore experience of young women with early stage of breast cancer. Twenty participants who were diagnosed with breast cancer within 3 to 6 months and attending to the oncology unit at Provincial General Hospital Kurunegala were purposively selected. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the same hospital. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data and thematic analyze was used for the data analysis. Three major themes were derived from the data. Major themes were severe physical discomfort due to disease condition, emotional disturbances and impaired socio-economic life. Severe physical discomfort was due to pain, loss of appetite and nausea, body image changes and barriers to day to day activities. Emotional disturbances had seen as a result of depression, anxiety, fear of recurrence and uncertainty about life. Lack of family support, social support and decline economic status were affected to impaired socio-economic life. It is concluded that pain was the mostly faced discomfort. Anxiety and depression were in high extent once they heard about the disease condition and after. Patients suffered a lot as decline their economic status because of leaving job and frequent hospitalizations. All these experiences collectively affect to the quality of life in early stage breast cancer patients. Hence, it is recommended to educate the patients about coping mechanisms in advance.

Keywords: early stage breast cancer, mental status, oncology clinic, severe discomfort and socio-economic life