

OP 11 - Experiences of the Patients with Fourth Stage Breast Cancer in Teaching Hospital, Anuradhapura

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Background: 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. Among them fourth stage breast cancer is extended beyond the immediate region of the tumor and may have invaded nearby lymph nodes to distant organs causing many challenges to patients. Assessing experiences of breast cancer patients could contribute to improved treatments as well as help to increase the quality of life.

Objectives: To explore experiences of patients with fourth stage breast cancer attending to oncology clinic at Teaching Hospital Anuradhapura.

Methodology: A phenomenological design was carried out to explore the experiences of patients with fourth stage breast cancer. Fifteen participants were purposively selected with fourth stage breast cancer, on chemotherapy and radiotherapy after they had surgical treatment during year 2016, 2017 and 2018 and who are attending the clinic at Teaching Hospital Anuradhapura. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of National Hospital Sri Lanka. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data and thematic analyze was used for the analysis.

Results and conclusions: Three major themes were derived from the data. Major themes are severe discomfort due to disease condition, variation of mental status and effectiveness of disease condition to the socio-economic life. Severe discomfort is commonly due to pain, loss of appetite, barriers to day-to-day activities and problems of sexuality. Variation of mental status mostly have been observed as a result of emotional dizziness, anxiety, fear and uncertainty about life. Lack of family support, social support and decline economic status were affected to negative experiences in socio-economic life. It is concluded that pain was the mostly faced discomfort after undergone surgical interventions and chemotherapy. Emotional dizziness have been observed in high extent once they heard about the disease condition and after. Patients suffered a lot due to deviation from families because of long length of hospital stay. All these experiences collectively affect the quality of life in fourth stage breast cancer patients. Hence, it is recommended to educate the patients about the coping mechanisms in advance.

Keywords: Fourth stage breast cancer, teaching hospital