

Living with Breast Cancer; Sri Lankan Rural Women's Reflexive Responses to Social and Emotional Challenges

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Abstract

Purpose: This study mainly focuses on identifying the reflexive responses of Sri Lankan rural women with breast cancers regarding social and emotional challenges after the diagnosis. Specifically, this research examines the responses related to six main themes of social and emotional challenges including stress and depression, family and community support, access to medical support and information, feeling isolated, coping with financial burden and spiritual directions.

Design: The research adopts a qualitative approach and data collected through semi-structured interviews from selected 10 rural women who are living with breast cancer for more than a period of one and half years to fifteen years. Six participants were direct patients and four participants were closest relatives of the patients. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data.

Findings: Most of the respondents are stressed and feared more at the initial stages of the breast cancer diagnosis and also in later periods too, due to the lack of proper support and other challenges like difficulty in accessing medical treatments and financial burden. Majority of women have obtained good support from the family and community in many circumstances. Accessing medical support and information were the biggest challenges due to long distance of travelling and not having proper access to information prior to the diagnosis. Feeling isolated and reducing social interactions were identified among younger women rather than elderly women. Finally, greater extent of spiritual directions was recognized as a coping mechanism and for the psychological well-being.

Keywords

Breast Cancer; Rural Women; Social Challenge, Emotional Challenges

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