

Information Needs of Young Breast Cancer Patients with Early Menopause Symptoms

Alisha D. Allison¹ and Janet S. Carpenter¹

Department of Adult Health, IU School of Nursing¹

Breast cancer treatments can cause amenorrhea, infertility, and many menopausal symptoms; there is increasing concern for improvements in quality of life for this population. Evidence suggests that premenopausal women with breast cancer do not get their information needs met regarding effects of treatment. The purpose of this study is to examine the information needs of this population, the best times to receive information, and how these two factors affect decision-making related to treatment. The gaps in research include no studies in the U.S. addressing the information needs of young breast cancer patients, and international data suggesting a lack of information for this population. The Ottawa Decision Support Framework (ODSF) is an evidence-based theory that acts as a guide for patients to use in decision-making regarding menopause. One of the components is relevant to my research: evaluating the needs of patients to discover needs relating to decision-making. It is necessary to understand the needs of patients in order to provide all necessary information and ease their individual decision-making processes.

Using a qualitative, descriptive design, 5 women were enrolled who were: diagnosed and treated for breast cancer, premenopausal at diagnosis (aged 21 to 45), reporting hot flashes, night sweats or other menopausal symptoms, and English speaking. After screening eligible and consenting to the study, the women were asked to provide demographic and cancer treatment information and complete a semi-structured interview. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. A qualitative analysis of the data is currently underway. Results from this study are anticipated to provide an outline of information breast cancer patients will need before treatment decisions are made. These findings will help medical professionals deliver valuable education and treatment options to the individual patient at the most beneficial time.

Mentor: Janet S. Carpenter, Department of Adult Health, IU School of Nursing, IUPUI