

Oral Hormone therapy undesirable effects in breast cancer patients of Fernando Fonseca Hospital

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1. Introduction

Undesirable effects (UE) associated with oral hormone therapy in breast cancer patients, like any other available medicine, are a major problem in long term therapy. They are usually identified during clinical trials, or following medicine marketing introduction. Trying to identify and systematize these UE in a restrict universe, like our hospital, will help us to direct our work aiming at minimising consequences of those UE.

2. Objectives

Oral Hormone therapy undesirable effects description on Hospital Fernando Fonseca breast cancer patients and identification of the measures taken by patients on those circumstances.

3. Study design

This is an observational, transversal, non-randomised, prospective study. An undesirable effect sheet was developed, named: "Undesirable effects Diary", for each medicine dispensed in our Oral Chemotherapy Dispensing Outpatient Setting. This sheet contains the most frequent undesirable effects of the considered medicine, according to Summary of Product Characteristic, a space for patient to point out which undesirable effects they felt and also a space for pharmacist notes related to measures taken by patients regarding possible undesirable effects. Medicines taken into account are: Anastrozole, Exemestan, Letrozole and Tamoxifen. Sheets were handed to patients, not before a purpose explanation, during their dispense medication visit and collected in their next visit to our Oral Chemotherapy Dispensing Outpatient Setting. This prospective survey started on June 2009 but we are still handing out and collecting sheets for all new patients. Our sample represents all breast cancer patients on oral hormone therapy followed in Oncology and Gynaecology medical appointment. Data are processed in a data base by Microsoft Excel.

Bias: Patient's difficulties in relating a certain UE to the administered medicine even in monotherapy; Patient's difficulties in perceiving a certain physiological sign and matching it to a certain medicine UE; Patient's inability to complete the given "Undesirable effects Diary" sheet.

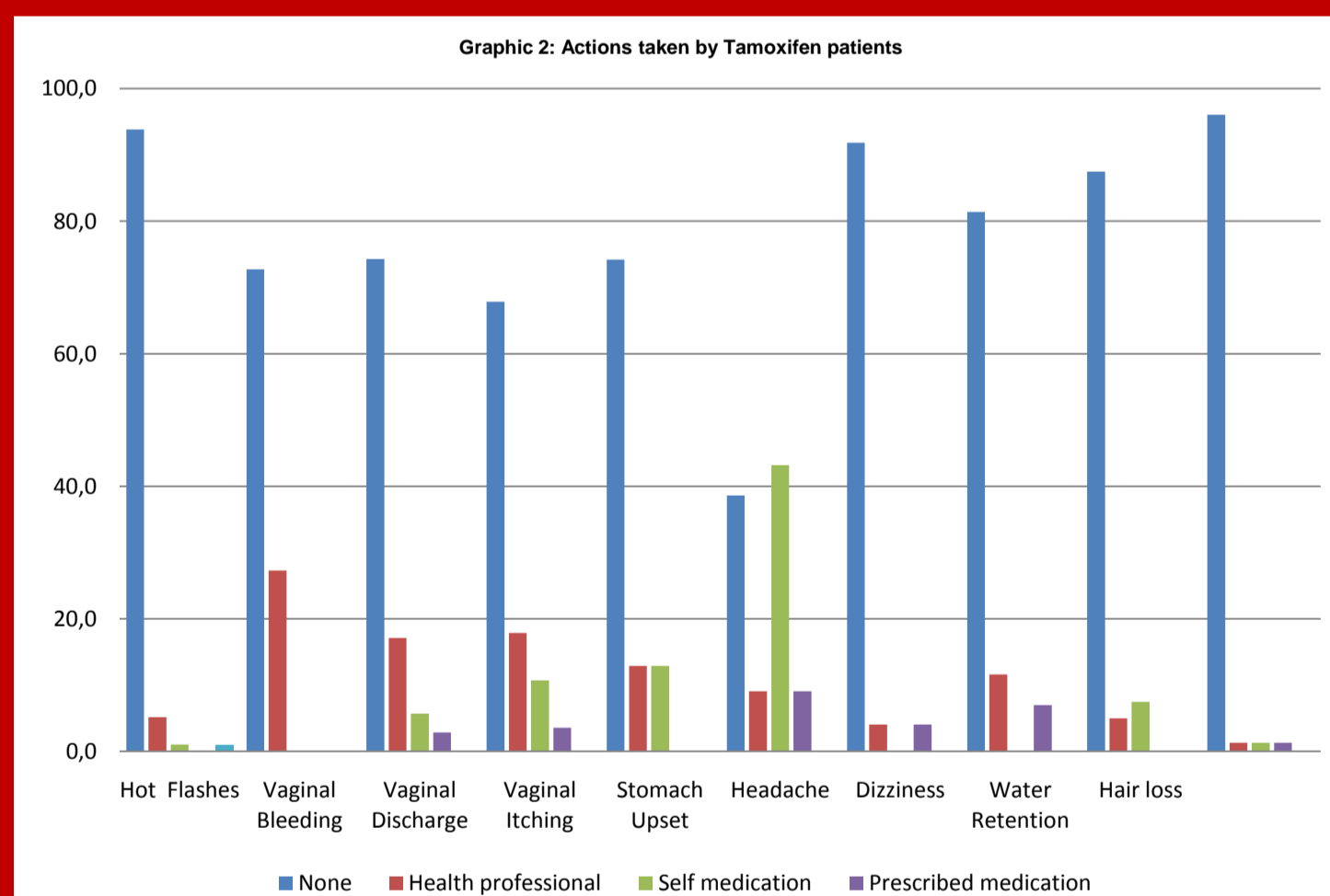
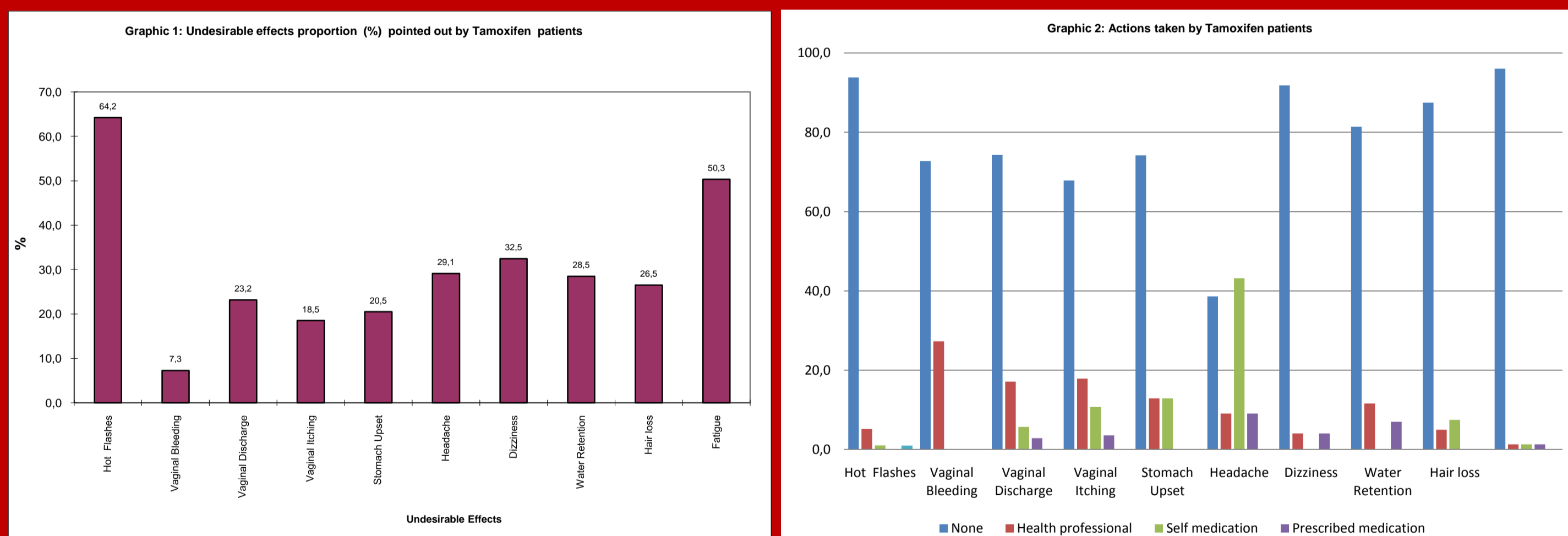
4. Results and Discussion

Up until January 2011, 269 patients engage in this survey. 151 were on tamoxifen therapy, 34 patients on Anastrozole therapy, 53 patients had letrozole as breast cancer hormone therapy and 31 patients were on exemestan therapy.

TAMOXIFEN

Graphic 1 shows that Hot flashes (64,2%) and Fatigue (50,3%) are the main UE reported by our tamoxifen patients. Nevertheless, it shouldn't be forgotten that Fatigue is not a common side effect of this medicine.

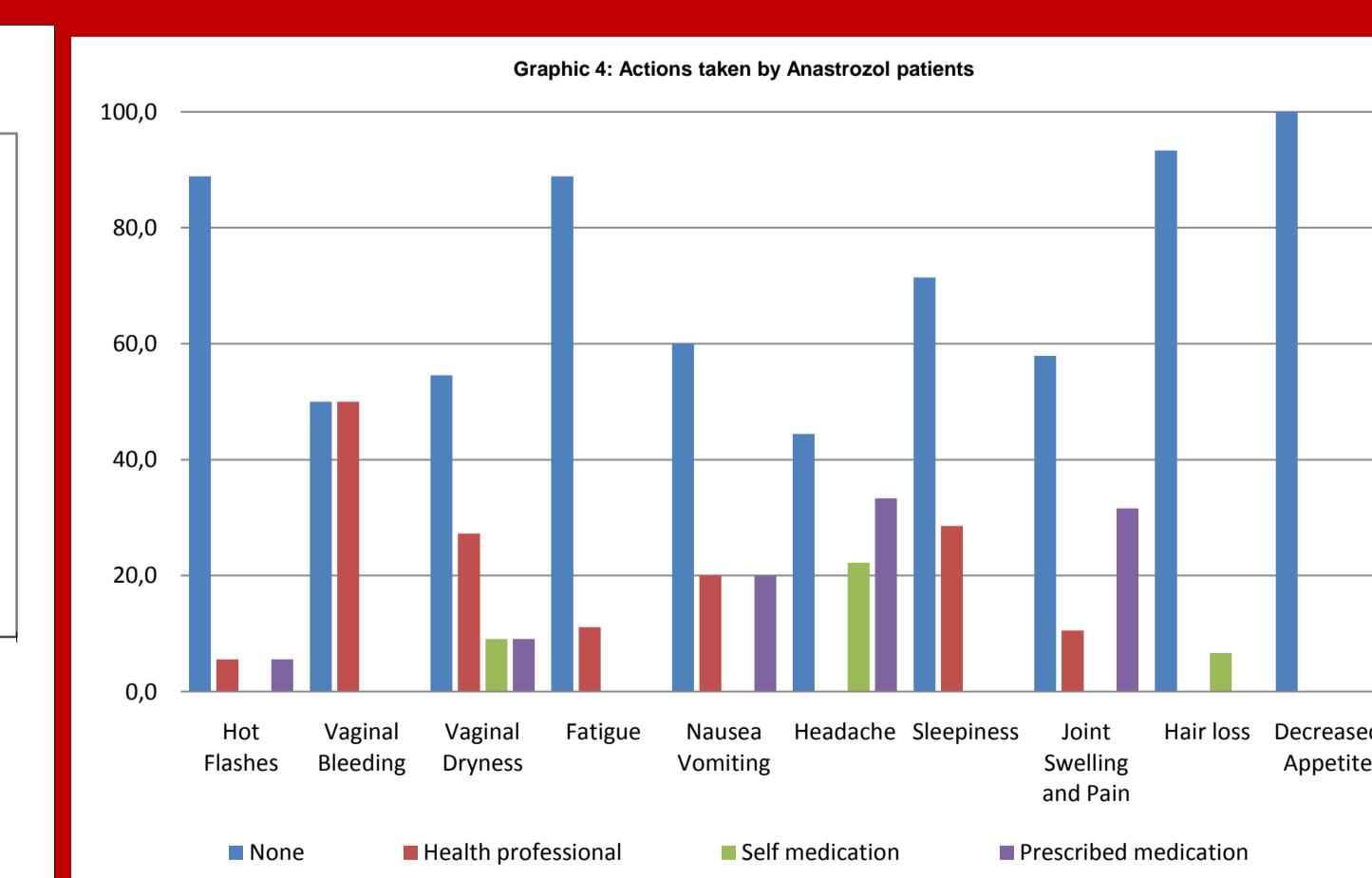
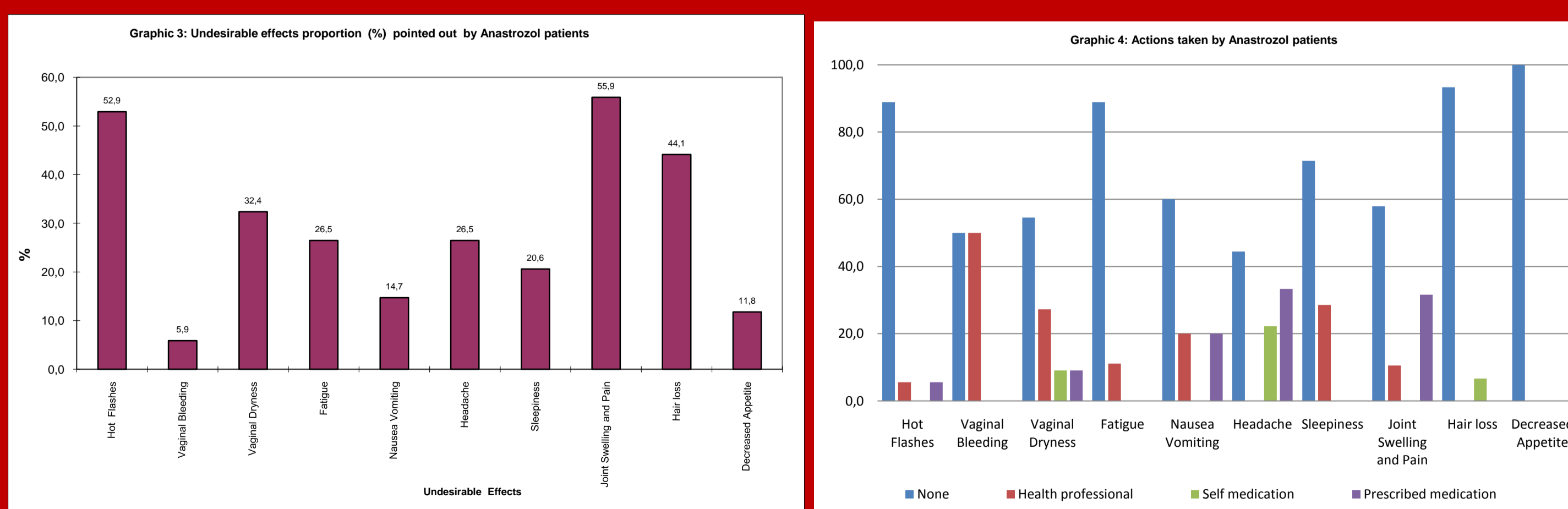
Regarding actions taken by patients according to the reported UE, Headache is the one that determines more self and prescribed medication use. (Graphic 2)



ANASTROZOLE

After Graphic 3 analysis, we can observe that joint pain (55,9%) and hot flashes (52,9%) are the main UE reported by our patients on anastrozole therapy.

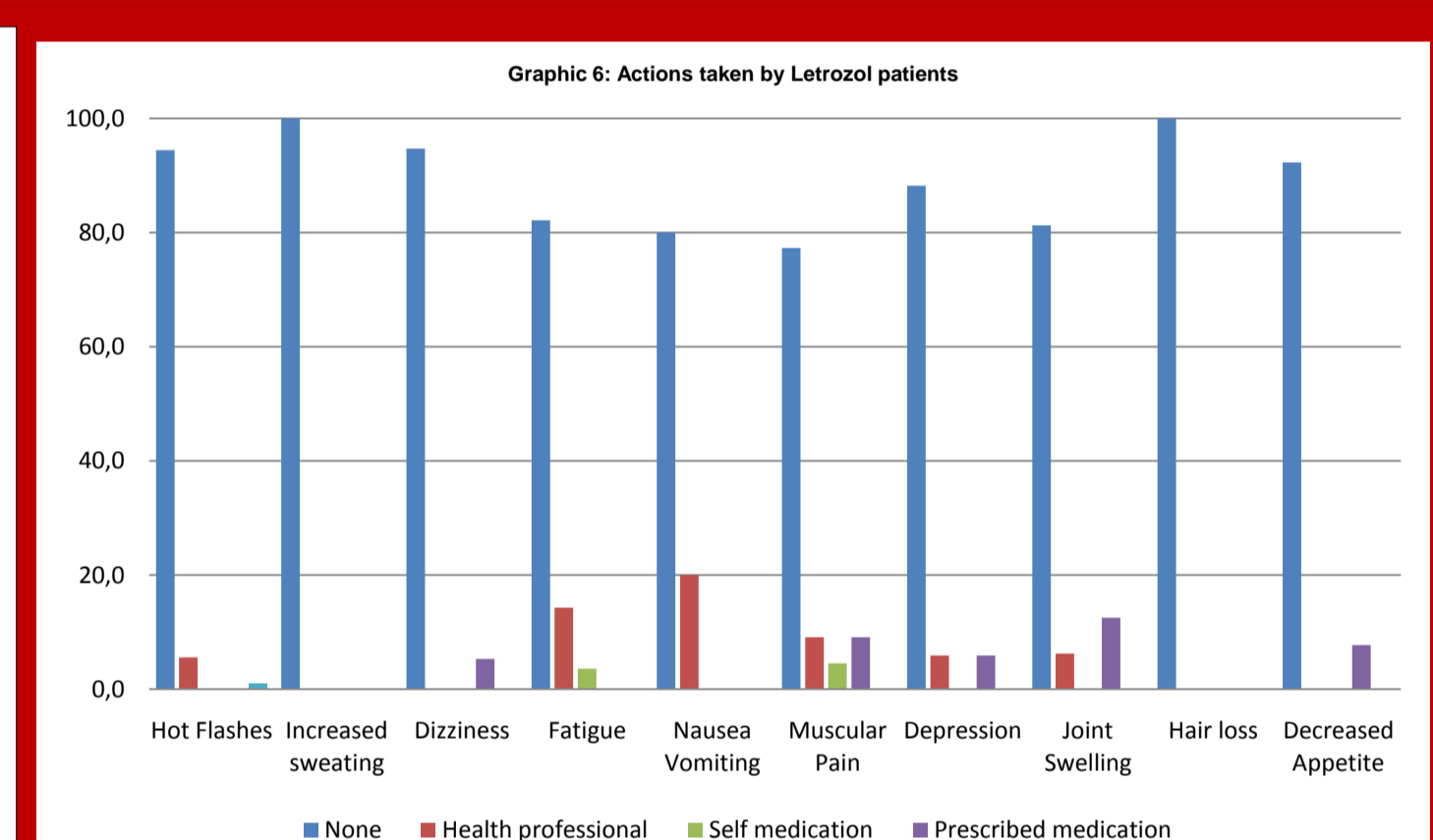
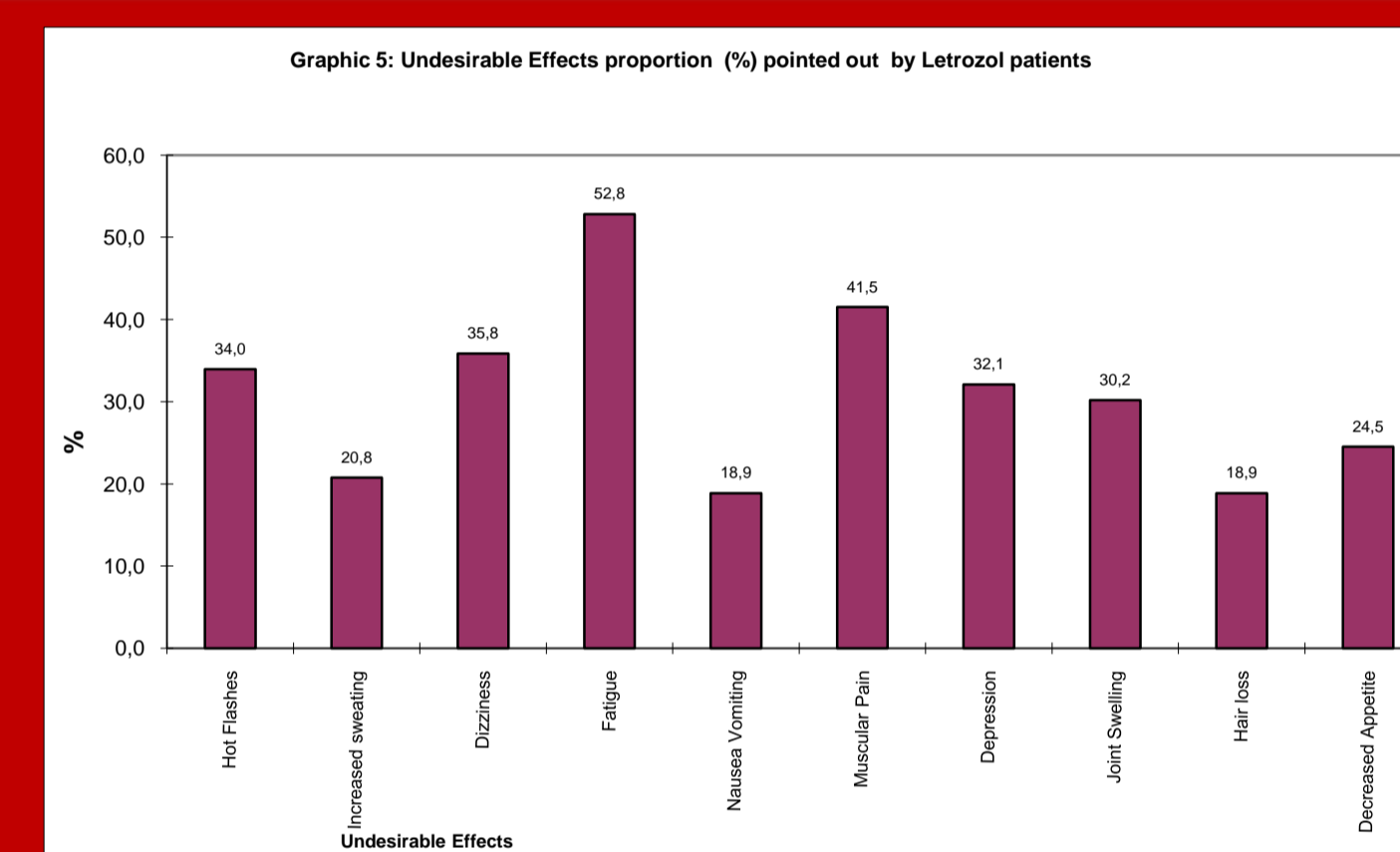
Regarding actions taken by patients according to the reported UE, joint pain is the UE that mostly determines patients to engage in appropriate prescribed medicine (Graphic 4)



LETROZOLE

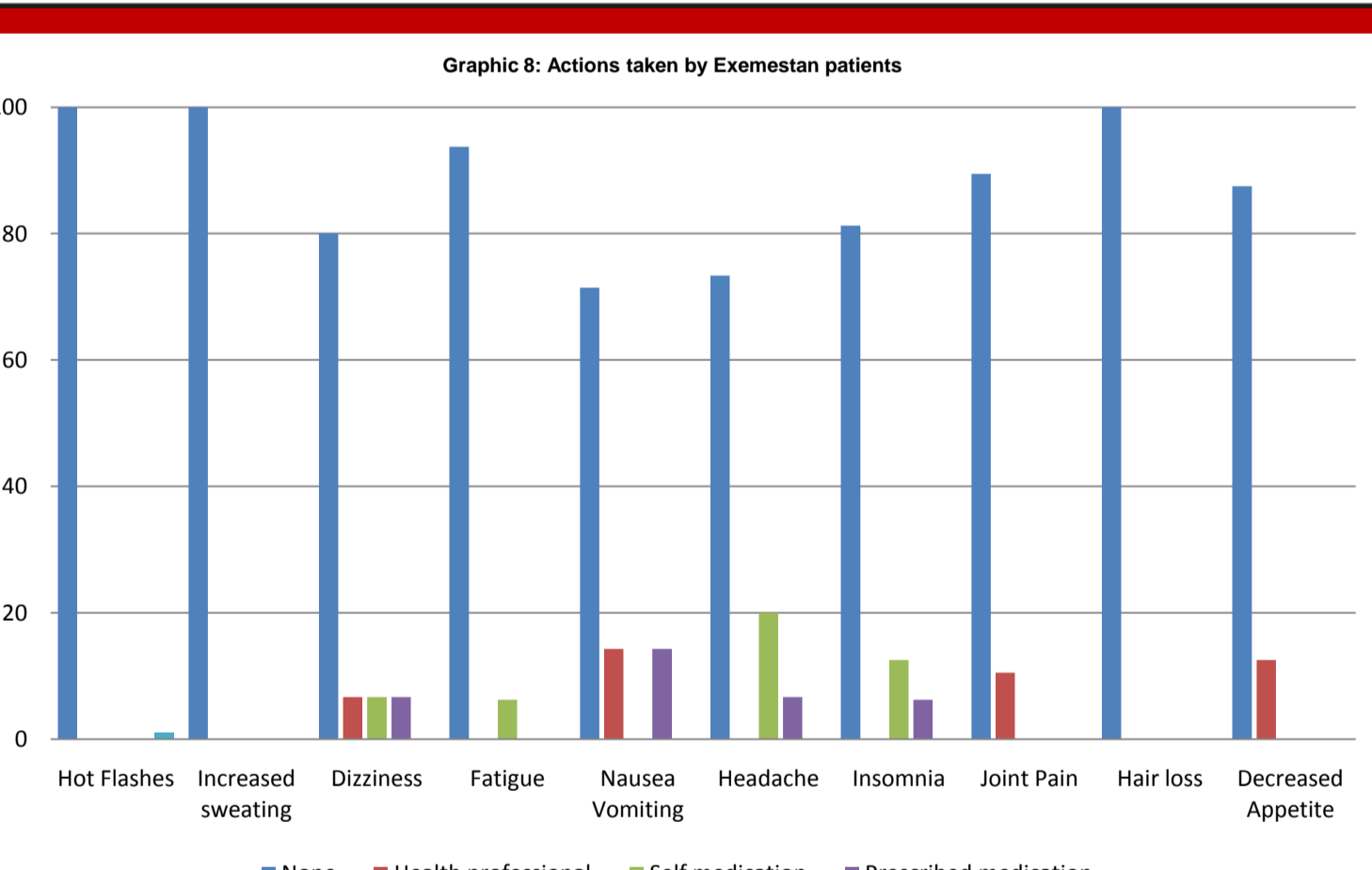
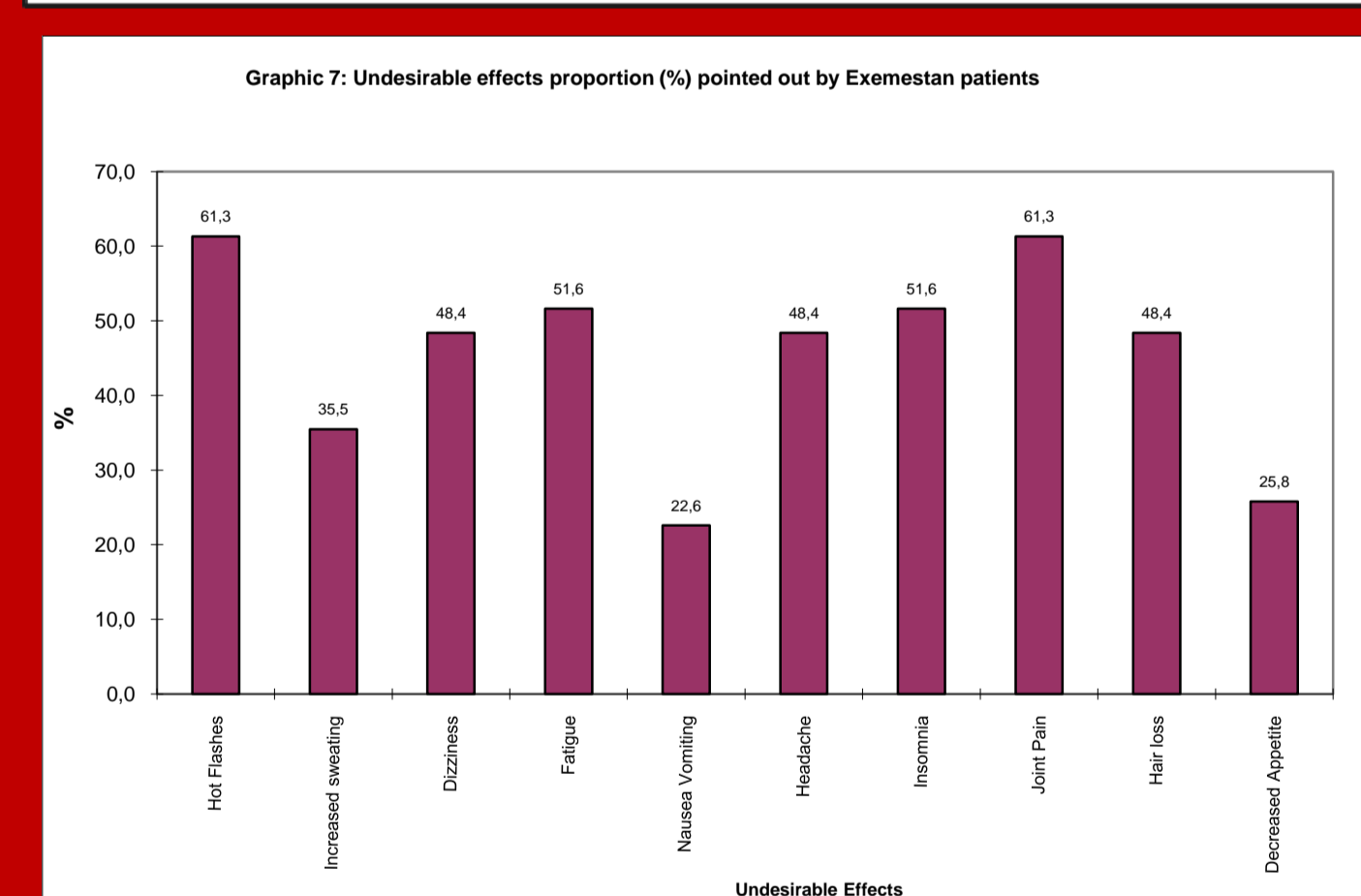
According to Graphic 5, we can observe that Fatigue (52,8%) and muscular pain (41,5%) are the main UE reported by our letrozole therapy patients.

Patients seek health professional help in fatigue and nausea cases while for instance in case of appetite loss and joint swelling they tend to go on prescribed therapeutic. (Graphic 6)



EXEMESTAN

Graphic 7 indicates that joint pain (61,3%) and Hot flashes (61,3%) are the main UE reported by our patients who are on exemestan hormone therapy. However, Nausea and Vomiting are the ones that make patients to look for health professionals and take prescribed medicines. Self medication is a regular approach when Headache and Insomnia are felt by this patients. (Graphic 8)



5. Conclusions

- ✓ Results are according to the Summary of Product Characteristics. However, it was expected a more pro-active approach by patients regarding their undesirable effects and we were also expecting more self medication use.
- ✓ We are conscient about bias apointed in the study design, however our conclusions are according to those bias.
- ✓ This survey allows Hospital Fernando Fonseca Oncology Pharmacists to be more aware of the most common UE felt by our patients in order to act before them to occur, helping patients by advising them what to do in each expected case.

6. Bibliography

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