Quality of Life of Emirati Women with Breast Cancer

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Summary

Female breast cancer (BC) is the leading cause of death among women and one of the leading cancer types worldwide in terms of the number of new cases since 2018. Many efforts have been made over the last decade not only to understand, prevent, diagnose, and treat BC but also to improve the quality of life (QoL) of BC survivors.

There is a large amount of research on the QoL of women with BC in Western societies, however, research in the Arab world is very limited. The few existing studies in the UAE showed that women in the UAE (Emirati and non-Emirati) have little to poor knowledge about BC. This low level of knowledge is coupled with social, cultural and religious restrictions, resulting in low uptake of BC screening services.

With the development in education and the participation of Emirati women in the workforce, there is a real need to improve women's QoL to be able to be active in the economy. However, to our knowledge, very few studies have assessed QoL among Emirati women with BC.

"**Since success requires an open mind and healthy body, the UAE Vision 2021 National Agenda aims to achieve a world-class healthcare system**". The national agenda highlights the importance of preventive medicine and seeks to reduce cancer and lifestyle related diseases. Therfore, this study will play a leading role in providing information about the QoL of Emirati women with BC that could enable health care policy makers to develop policies that enhance the QoL of women with BC. the study will help in recognizing the aspects of QoL in BC survivorship

that lack assets and provide evidence-based data that can help solve problems related to surviving BC for Emirati women.

A population-based cross-sectional study was conducted on 250 Emirati women using a multistage stratified clustered random sampling. The participants were interviewed face-to-face using a structured questionnaire composed of sociodemographic variables, reproductive characteristics, and the the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer Quality of Life Cancer-Specific version (EORTC QLQ-C30, v.3.0) and the EORTC QoL Breast Cancer-Specific version (EORTC QLQ-BR23) translated into Arabic

Emirati BC survivors reported good QoL overall. The most bothersome symptoms were sleep disturbance, fatigue, pain, hair loss and arm symptoms. Emirati women scored average on all functional scales, which indicates mediocre functioning, but high on the symptom scales, which indicates worse symptoms. Factors associated with a decline in the domains of QoL included higher age, lower income, and history of metastases, mastectomy, and lymph node dissection.

Results indicated that Emirati women with BC experience problems in some of the QOL domains, and further research in this direction is recommended, especially in the emotional domain, to understand how better this domain could be evaluated and managed among Emirati women with special consideration of cultural sensitivity. In addition, the study highlighted important aspects of the disease, such as side effects of the treatment and the need to explain them to patients along with ways of coping and adjustment. Furthermore, we recommend that special attention be given to women with metastatic history, as the impact on their QoL is substantial.

To sum up, Emirati women were shown to have a good QoL compared to women in the region, and they performed well on the functional scales but poorly on the symptom scales. While social functioning scored the highest, emotional functioning scored the lowest. Factors associated with a decline in the domains of QoL included higher age, lower income, and history of metastases, mastectomy, and lymph node dissection. The study contributes to a better understanding of the QoL of Emirati women with BC and the different factors that affect their wellbeing, which could lead to enhanced care and support for Emirati women with BC.