

Lecture

Prevalence of Persistent Postoperative Arm Pain After Breast Cancer Surgery and the Association with Functionality and Disability of the Affected Upper Limb

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Background: Many women who underwent breast cancer surgery experience persistent postoperative pain, and shoulder impairments that influence the quality of their life.

Purpose: This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of pain in patients who underwent breast cancer surgery after the passage of the healing time (e.g., three months) and to examine potential differences in cognitive, social, and emotional functioning (assessed with EORTC-QLQ30) between those who experience pain versus those without pain. A further aim was to investigate the relationship between shoulder active movement and the self-reported measures of arm disability and pain derived from the EORTC-BR23 and the QuickDash.

Method: A sample of 107 women who visited outpatients and physiotherapy departments completed quality of life measures and measures of physical functioning. Additionally, arm functionality was assessed by measuring the shoulders' flexion and adduction.

Results: More than half of the participants reported pain and shoulder impairment at least three months after their breast cancer surgery. Pain vs. no pain group presented differences in quality-of-life parameters of functionality. Self-reported pain and arm disability were associated with decreased shoulder flexion and adduction. Although there were differences in quality of life parameters between the pain and no pain group, in total the women who participated in this survey were primarily active and functional despite evident shoulder impairment.

Keywords: breast cancer surgery, persistent pain, shoulder impairment

