



CoRPS

# Survivorship and life style issues

Workshop 1: Workshop for nurses and medical staff

Center of Research  
on Psychology  
in Somatic diseases



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# Some statistics<sup>1</sup>

- 12.3% of American women will be diagnosed with BC.
- 2014 (United States):
  - Incidence: 234.000
  - Deaths: 40.000
  - Percent surviving 5 years (2004-2010): 89.2%
- Increasing number of breast cancer survivors
  - Prevalence in 2011: 2.899.726 women with BC

<sup>1</sup> SEER data (<http://seer.cancer.gov>)

# Survivorship definitions

- Definition survivorship<sup>1</sup>:
  - Anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer, from the time of diagnosis, until end of life.
- Definition long-term survivorship<sup>2</sup>:
  - Every person still alive 5 years after diagnosis.
- Survivorship research:
  - Focus on adverse effects of cancer and its treatment, and to optimize the outcomes for cancer survivors and their families.

# 3 stages of survivorship<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Acute:

- From diagnosis till end of initial treatment
- Main issues: treatment and side effects

## 2. Extended:

- From completion of treatment, remission or both
- Main issues: watchful waiting, follow-ups, possibly treatment

## 3. Permanent survival:

- Extended disease-free survival when likelihood of recurrence is very low

<sup>1</sup> Mullan, F. Seasons of survival – reflections of a physician with cancer. NEJM 1985.

# After initial treatment – now what?

- Breast cancer can be a life-altering experience.
- Initial treatment may be over, the effects of cancer and its treatment are often not.
- After treatment, a patient will look and feel different.
  - Emotionally
  - Physically
- Health concerns and difficulty moving forward are common.

# Common late effects

- Some experience a healthy cancer survivorship, some don't
- Common late effects:
  - Emotional distress and depression (14%)
  - Fatigue (20-30%)
  - Insomnia (40%)
  - Fear of recurrence (25%)
  - Sexuality and intimacy issues (20-30%)

# Late effects of treatment

- Late effects of chemotherapy:
  - Early menopause (including fertility issues)
  - Weight gain
  - Fatigue
  - Cognitive problems (chemo-brain)
- Late effects of radiotherapy:
  - Changes in the look and feel of the breast
  - Lymphedema

# More attention is needed

- More attention needed for side-effects<sup>1</sup>. One-third of BC survivors reported >5 unmet needs after treatment.
- However<sup>2</sup>;
  - Follow-up mainly focused on detection of recurrence
  - Still lack of evidence-based treatment/support programs
  - Oncologists often not specialized in wide-ranging side-effects
  - Increased rehabilitation efforts will entail additional costs to the health care system



# Survivorship care plans (SCPs)

- How to prepare patients for survivorship phase?
  - SCPs: recommended by IOM since 2006<sup>1</sup>
  - Aim: address unmet needs, enhance survivorship care coordination, and physician-physician communication
  - Content: info on treatment, side-effects, follow-up care
  - Few measurable benefits but high levels of satisfaction<sup>2</sup>
  - New RCTs needed on content, form and delivery of SCPs

# Healthy lifestyle I

A healthy lifestyle includes:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
  - Decreases the risk of BC recurrence, BC mortality and overall mortality
- Eating a healthy diet
  - Promotes overall health
  - may help protect against different types of cancer and other diseases

# Healthy lifestyle II

A healthy lifestyle includes:

- Physical activity (exercise)
  - Helps to maintain a healthy weight
  - Lowers the risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.
  - Might lower the risk of BC recurrence, BC-specific mortality, and overall mortality.
- Not smoking
  - Decreases the risk of BC recurrence, BC-specific mortality, and overall mortality

# Other treatment options

- Common late effects and treatment options:
  - Depression: antidepressants, CBT and physical exercise
  - Fatigue: Multidisciplinary approach. Difficult to treat.
  - Insomnia: nurse-delivered CBT for insomnia
  - Fear of recurrence: accurate information, mindfulness
  - Sexuality/intimacy issues; Multidisciplinary approach

# Take home message

It's not over when its over. The long-term management of breast cancer survivors deserves more attention and requires a multidisciplinary approach

**Thank you for your attention!**



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