

The Impact of Chemotherapy on Female Breast Cancer Survivors & the Occupation of Sleep: A Mixed-Methods Study

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DOI: [10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-PO169](https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-PO169)

Date presented: April 22, 2023

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PURPOSE: Approximately 80% of breast cancer patients report sleep disturbances while undergoing treatment (2,3). The purpose of this mixed-method research was to understand the impact of chemotherapy on the occupation of sleep among breast cancer survivors.

DESIGN: Participants were recruited through purposive and convenience sampling; eligibility criteria included adult women who had been diagnosed and had completed breast cancer treatment within the past ten years, who could read/speak English, and who were members of a closed Facebook group for breast cancer survivors.

METHOD: Ten female breast cancer survivors were recruited through Facebook and Instagram to complete a closed-ended survey questionnaire and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) questions. Survey data was analyzed through Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP). Two participants who had undergone chemotherapy participated in virtual face-to-face interviews. Qualitative data were analyzed by identifying codes and themes. Trustworthiness was ensured by triangulation, saturation, member checking and peer debriefing.

RESULTS: Descriptive statistics were used to report quantitative data, which showed a significant decrease in the number of hours of sleep for breast cancer survivors before the start of the chemotherapy treatment compared to during treatment. There was a significant change in the quality and quantity of sleep among participants. Qualitative themes that emerged were - side effects of medications and supplements, disturbed and interrupted sleep cycles, fatigue from treatments, and additional mental health factors impacting their sleep quality.

CONCLUSION AND IMPACT STATEMENT: While results indicate that chemotherapy does impact on quality and quantity of sleep among breast cancer survivors, more research is warranted to explore other breast cancer treatments, such as surgical procedures, radiation and hormone therapy and their impact on sleep.

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