

To assess the long-term quality-of-life (QOL) outcomes in disease-free breast cancer survivors

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Background

Breast cancer is the most prevalent malignancy amongst women in India. Due to the increasing use of multimodality approach, there is an increase in the number of long term breast cancer survivors. To determine the long term effects of breast cancer and to evaluate the complete outcome of cancer treatment, it is essential to assess the quality of life (QOL) in breast cancer survivors.

Aim

To assess the long-term quality-of-life (QOL) outcomes in disease-free breast cancer survivors.

Material & Methods

A Structured questionnaire was used for assessment of QOL in 50 breast cancer survivors. They were managed by the same oncological team at Safdarjung Hospital. The instrument included 41 items representing the four domains of quality of life incorporating physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well being.

Result

Physical and emotional well-being was excellent. Social functioning and energy level was high and remained unchanged over time. Menopausal symptoms were less frequent. The most frequently mentioned complaint was of painful/swollen arm. Majority of survivors were emotionally stable & claimed to have good QOL. 10% of all cases showed severe depression. Spiritually & religiously inclined survivors showed better QOL as religious activities provided social & mental stimulation. Almost all survivors with good QOL had strong social support from family & friends.

Conclusion

During the follow up, it was found that majority of the survivors were leading a good quality of life. The fact that social support was a predictor of a better QOL indicates that interventions aimed at increasing such support may have additional long-term benefits. Having a greater appreciation of long-term QOL can be important for women newly diagnosed with breast cancer, survivors & health care providers