

Body image in women with mastectomies: a review with a quantitative approach

Fernanda Sucasas Frison; Antonieta Keiko Kakuda Shimo

University of Campinas / UNICAMP

Abstract:

Despite technological advances and treatment options available today, cancer is still a disease full of stigma and commonly associated with death and pain (psychological and physical) (Santos, 2007). Thus, receiving a diagnostic of a cancer disease can cause serious emotional reactions and conflicts, leaving deep scars on the patient, his family and social network (Amorim, 2006).

Women with breast cancer suffer in a peculiar way because, besides the disease itself, the body part affected leads to other feelings and sufferings. The breast is considered a symbol of motherhood, sexuality and is object of contemplation among women. It is also an erogenous zone and its removal can influence libido causing distress, decreased self-esteem, depression, fear of rejection, etc. The diagnosis of the disease leads to fear of death, of metastasis and of the risk of being mutilated.

With this mutilation comes many feelings because the sense of body integrity is not present, hurting the self-esteem and the love we have for our body. This causes a change in the image we have of the body. This way, women who experienced breast cancer and mastectomy can have different emotions and feelings of inadequacy of body image that will affect their lives in social, family and marital relationships (Amorim, 2006).

Changes that impair the body, especially those most culturally valued, will lead the subject to a lack of individual and social adaptation because the expectations he and the society created about his body will need to be rethought (Kebbe, 2006).

Reflecting on these questions, it is clear how the mastectomy leaves deep marks on the woman's life with changes in the dynamics of body image, establishing new relations between this image, body, culture, mental representations and the contextualization of it with the new situation.

This subject is relevant in different areas of knowledge and checking the scientific studies of the relationship between mastectomy and body image highlights the importance of the theme.

The aim of this paper is to present a review of the literature on body image of women who underwent partial or total mastectomy, developing a quantitative analysis of national and international scientific publications, indexed in the period 2003 to 2009.

The search of texts for this study was conducted in virtual libraries in the database of the Latin American Health Sciences (LILACS), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and Comprehensive Medline (Medline) using as descriptors the keywords: mastectomia, imagem corporal, imagem corporal e mastectomia, imagen corporal y la mastectomia, mastectomía, imagen corporal, body image, mulheres mastectomizadas, body image woman mastectomy.

The criteria to include the texts were: titles and abstracts indicating proximity to the theme; texts in English, Spanish or Portuguese, published between the years of 2003 to 2009, accessible through the Internet. Texts that were excluded after reading the summaries were not about mastectomy and body image.

In the Lilacs 27 articles were selected of 222, in Scielo 23 were selected of 185 and in Medline 8 were selected of 13. Thus, a total of 58 articles that were of interest for this review were selected.

After its reading, each article's structure was analyzed, taking into account the year of publication, methodology, data collection instruments, language and country of origin provided the authors.

With respect of the year of publication, it was found a prevalence of articles in the years 2005, 2007 and 2008, each with 11 articles (18.96%),

totaling 56.8% of the database. The year that showed the lowest number of publications related to the topic was 2004 with only 02 (3.44%) articles.

The language that prevailed in the review was the Portuguese, in Brazil represented by 40 (68.96%) articles, and Portugal by 02 (3.44%). The second languages were English and Spanish with 08 (13.8%) articles each, resulting in 27.6% of the total.

The qualitative approach also was significant in the review, with a total of 23 (39.7%) of the studies, and within that approach, the choice of qualitative methodology of the exploratory type in 09 cases. Another approach that stands out is quantitative with 18 (31%). We also had 13 (22.4%) of the studies that used the review as a method, and 04 (6.9%) with qualitative and quantitative characterization.

Within the quantitative approach, the data collection instruments were mostly validated questionnaires for subjects surveyed, representing 10 (55.5%) of 18 articles of quantitative characteristic.

In the qualitative approach the most used tool for data collection was the recorded semi-structured interviews with 13 (56.5%) of the 23 articles of qualitative characteristic.

In the quali-quantitative articles, the predominant strategy for data collection with semi-structured questions and questionnaires with scale, being 02 (50%) of the total sample.

With the data presented thus far, there was a large number of productions in this subject, especially in recent years, and a significant contribution from Brazil.

This may be related to the large number of people affected by breast cancer in the country, accounting for high mortality rates and a public health problem.

Another point to be emphasized is the methodological rigor found in texts and most of them used validated questionnaires suitable for the populations of samples in the quantitative studies.

In qualitative, semi-structured questions predominated as the method for data collection, and these were pre-tested before being applied. After this pilot period the replies were recorded in order to have a larger amount of information.

In these respects, we conclude that this review has helped in demonstrating the characteristics of articles published in the area in a quantitative approach.

References

- 1- Amorim, C.M.B.F. (2006). Doença oncológica da mama: vivências de mulheres mastectomizadas. *Revista de Ciências da Saúde de Macau*, 6(2), 108-113.
- 2- Kebbe, L.M. (2006). Desempenho de atividades e imagem corporal: representações sociais de um grupo de mulheres com câncer de mama. Tese de Doutorado em Enfermagem em Saúde Pública. Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirão Preto , Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil.
- 3- Santos, M.C. (2007). Mastectomia e feminilidade: uma questão perante o câncer. Dissertação de Mestrado em Saúde Coletiva. Instituto de Saúde Coletiva, Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso, Brasil.