

3rd World Congress on

Women's Health & Breast Cancer

October 03-05, 2016 London, UK

Not feeling sick from breast cancer: A framework on health status perceptions transition process

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Background: In what state of health do women with breast cancer consider themselves to be? Health professionals classify them as cancer victims but few studies have examined women's perceptions of their own health following a breast cancer diagnosis. We looked at the transition in health status perceptions between, before and after receiving the diagnosis.

Aim: The aim of the study is to develop a framework on health status perceptions transition process in breast cancer patients.

Methods: A grounded theory design was chosen to develop a framework.

Results: From an analysis of semi-structured individual interviews with 32 women, it emerged that over a two-year period, the participants went through four iterative steps between receipt of the official diagnosis and the return of the level of energy once the treatments were done. These four steps were: reacting emotionally, facing the situation, constructing a new identity and reacting to social representations of cancer. The participants did not feel sick from breast cancer.

Conclusion: This study shows learning to live with a sword of Damocles over the head during the transition process. The emergent steps of the health status perceptions transition process in breast cancer trajectory give direction for care.

Biography

Maude Hébert is a Professor at the University of Québec in Trois-Rivières. She completed her Graduation in "Women diagnosed of breast cancer". She teaches research methodology and therapeutic relationship. Her research interests cover the concept of "Transition between health and illness and the perceptions of health and illness in the population in oncology".

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