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Sexual Health after Mastectomy: Experiences of Arabic Women

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Background: Incidence rates of breast cancer (BC) are rising in Arabic countries. Despite this increased incidence, Arabic women have low participation rates in BC screening. This means that many Arabic women are diagnosed with BC at advanced stages of the disease, resulting in limited treatment options and mastectomy more likely. Mastectomy has both physical and psychological consequences that can affect women's sexual health. However, literature that focuses on the sexual health of Arabic women after mastectomy is scarce. This lack of information limits health professionals' knowledge in terms of the support these women require to address their sexual health needs.

Aim: The aim of this study was to explore the sexual health experiences of Arabic women who have had a mastectomy.

Methods: A qualitative approach underpinned by social constructivism, feminist perspectives and storytelling was used. Participants were recruited via social media and through relevant support groups. Data were collected via a short survey, and by semi-structured interviews conducted either face-to-face, online or via telephone. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed.

Findings: Twenty-two women participated in interviews. Participants shared their stories of when they first felt a lump in their breast through to diagnosis and the aftermath of surgical intervention. Moreover, the presentation will highlight women's changing body image, deteriorating sexual relationships and sources of support during their journey. Findings from this study will have the potential to inform strategies for interventions that will best accommodate the sexual health needs of Arabic women who have had mastectomies.

Biography

Rawan Waleed Mahmoud ALSABABHA is a post Graduate Researcher in Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia.

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