

Physical Therapy is Necessary for Women Who has Been Diagnosed with Breast Cancer

Nivedita Prabhu*

Department of Physiotherapy, School of Allied Health Sciences, Manipal University, Manipal, Karnataka, India

Introduction

Breast cancer, which is the most often diagnosed malignancy in women, currently has a survival rate of around 90%, up roughly 20% since the 1970's.

With nearly 3 million women living beyond a breast cancer diagnosis, it's critical to think about how a woman lives following treatment. While many cancer patients are relieved to be able to go on following treatment, the harsh treatments might interfere with daily activities. These side effects can last for years after you've been diagnosed. Women must be aware of these side effects in order to recognise them and seek treatment before they become a problem [1].

Women with breast cancer are usually subjected to some form of surgery. A lumpectomy is the least intrusive procedure, as it simply removes the tumour and leaves much of the breast tissue intact. A mastectomy, which entails the removal of all of the breast tissue, is the second most invasive procedure. The most invasive procedure is usually the removal of lymph nodes in the armpit region, also known as an axillary lymph node dissection, on the cancerous side.

Intensive chemotherapy and radiation therapy treatments are frequently used in conjunction with these operations. The surgery's and treatments' outcomes and side effects may impair overall function and, as a result, quality of life. For more than a decade, I've examined the effects of cancer and its therapies on daily function - particularly arm use in women with breast cancer – as a physical therapist and researcher. The good news is that physical therapy can assist women in recovering from cancer treatments and returning to full exercise.

Arms that aren't going to Stop Hurting

Women who have their lymph nodes surgically removed are at risk for lymphedema, a persistent illness that causes swelling in the arms or legs and affects 10% to 30% of women, depending on the type of surgery and radiation treatment they receive [2].

Chemotherapies, particularly a class of medications known as taxanes, frequently cause damage to the nerves in the hands and feet, a condition known as peripheral neuropathies. This has an impact on the balance – or vestibular – system as well as fine motor control, such as holding a pen or typing on a computer. People with poor balance are more likely to fall, which is a leading cause of disability and mortality among people aged 65 and up. Taxanes and another class of medications known as anthracyclines can harm the heart, leading to heart failure.

The amount of radiation received by women during radiation therapy is lower than it was for women treated years ago, but it is still a problem. While radiation can save a person's life, it also has major adverse effects that can last

for years. Over time, the tissues in the radiation field, or the area exposed to radiation, stiffen and thicken, becoming more fibrotic, or thickened. All tissues in the field, including the heart, as well as the muscles and ligaments in the chest, are included.

New Treatments and Techniques Are Being Developed

Many of these adverse effects can be prevented or efficiently treated, but only if they are handled promptly. The Prospective Surveillance Model is one type of care that has a lot of evidence behind it. This strategy calls for baseline testing prior to cancer surgery, as well as interval surveillance following surgical and medical therapies. Any deficiencies that may obstruct effective medical treatment – such as the ability to assume the position required for radiation – can be resolved prior to cancer therapy by completing baseline testing [3].

And the measurements acquired at this visit become the standard against which subsequent visits are judged. While this is not presently the standard of treatment for breast cancer survivors, many of us in the physical therapy profession who work with them hope that it will become so in the future. People with breast cancer should see a physical therapist twice a year for preventative checkups, just as they should see a dentist twice a year for preventative checkups. Following people following surgery and medical treatments on a regular basis provides for early diagnosis of difficulties, allowing intervention to address minor issues before they become major issues.

Physical therapists are also crucial in the management of post-treatment adverse effects. Physical therapists are experts in movement and are well-equipped to treat weakness, mobility, and balance problems.

Physical therapists are also crucial in the treatment of lymphedema. Many physical therapists are trained lymphedema therapists and have particular training in lymphedema care. To treat lymphedema, these specialist practitioners use lymphedema-specific massage, compression bandages and clothing, and exercise [4].

References

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*Address for Correspondence: Nivedita Prabhu, Department of Physiotherapy, Manipal University, Karnataka, India; E-mail: prabhu.n@gmail.com

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