

Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Breast Cancer Survivors with Lymphedema

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Breast Cancer-Related Lymphedema (BCRLE) is an incurable condition that causes varied degrees of chest, arm and/or hand swelling, pain, limb deformity, and physical immobility and patients are at risk for the development of this dreaded condition for their lifetime. Studies embracing these topics in the healthcare literature are scant. This study is to describe and understand the differences and similarities between races and among members of the same race living with the experience of BCRLE. A mixed-method utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used. Over a ten-month period, a total 14 out of 25 participants completed both the interview and questionnaire sections of the study. Descriptive analysis of data involved participant responses to the following surveys: Patient-Doctor-Relationship Questionnaire (PDRQ-9) (Farin, Gramm, & Schmidt 2013), Group-Based Medical Mistrust Scale (GBMMS) (Thompson et al, 2004), and The Patient Perceptions of Integrated Care Survey (PPICS) (Singer, Friedberg, Klang, Dunn, & Kuhn, 2013). The study findings concurred with the argument that patients have significant global factors that contribute to distrust of physicians and other health care providers. These concerns should be considered in clinical practice to facilitate trust and improve the provision of health care to patients. In general, study participants proposed that healthcare providers were unconcerned and/or uninformed about BCRLE. Those perceived behaviors also seemed to contribute to feelings of distrust and amplify perceptions of feelings of rejection, unconcern, uncompassionate and unsupportive attitudes on the part of some healthcare providers. In-depth interviews were completed, audio taped, and transcribed. Five themes were intuited: (a) unconcerned/uninformed healthcare providers; (b) mistrust of physicians; (c) communication barriers; (d) educational preparedness, and (e) use of support groups. The findings from this study may be used to help healthcare providers examine the long-term psychological and psychosocial effects of BCRLE on the survivorship of women.

Biography:

Dr. Deborah Collins-Bohler, Assistant Professor at Eastern Michigan University, graduated from Wayne State University and holds a Post-Master's Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. Bohler's extensive clinical background includes: Community/Public Health program planning and design, healthcare administration in Hospice and Home Health Care, Geriatric Rehabilitation, Retirement Disability, Workers Compensation; Auto/No Fault; Catastrophic Case Management, and Occupational Health Nursing. Bohler has taught undergraduate and graduate nursing courses at several universities.