Title: Young women with breast cancer; the personal side of treatment.

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Breast cancer has come into national focus with the diagnosis and treatment of high profile young Australians, however to date little research has focused specifically on understanding the ramifications of treatment for young women. In fact, this age group represents 25% of all women diagnosed and as Dixon and Hortobagy (2000) explain young women are more likely to be diagnosed with a biologically aggressive cancer and tend to need multimodal treatment. While all women will suffer physical and emotional distress during treatment for breast cancer, Dunn and Steginga (2000) argue that young women experience greater difficulties related to their stage of life.

Methods
The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of young women under the age of fifty years with breast cancer. The interpretive design allowed the women to describe their personal experiences through diagnosis and treatment; the researcher encouraged the women to speak openly, without the constraints of specific questions. The sample of women volunteered after hearing the researcher speak at a younger women’s group.

Results and implications
This paper highlights the specific concerns that young women face during the treatment trajectory for breast cancer. In this study, the women all had multimodal treatments ranging from lumpectomy through chemotherapy and radiation therapy to breast reconstruction. The young women in this study described the difficulties they faced in relation to their treatment and how it influenced their ability to maintain their roles within their families. This paper will increase the understanding of health professionals about the ramifications of breast cancer treatment particularly for younger women who face different life issues than their older counterparts.
