Paper 34
Exploring the concerns for young women with breast cancer; highlighting the influences on the children in the family.

Elisabeth Coyne
Griffith University
J.Wollin, D Stewart
Griffith University

Email: e.coyne@griffith.edu.au

Abstract

Introduction: Breast cancer is the leading cancer for women with 25 per cent of these women aged under 50 years (AIHW 2010). This diagnosis influences not only the young woman but also her family who support her closely through the first year. These women are often in a phase of their life where they have children under the age of 20 years and experience a different range of difficulties to older women. This presentation introduces data exploring the family and children’s experience during the adjustment phase of breast cancer.

Methods: This study was guided by the Resiliency Model of Family Stress. Surveys were completed by 111 participants exploring their individual and family strengths and resources during active treatment. The descriptive quantitative analysis provided information about the families’ appraisal of the stress and problem solving ability. Personal interviews were completed with 23 women and their family members including children over 18 years, providing an insight into the difficulties and changes within the family.

Results: The quantitative results identified age as a main influencing factor for the participants. The qualitative data gave an insight into how the family adjusted to the diagnosis of breast cancer. Themes reflected both positive and negative aspects from openly sharing and involving children to not sharing the diagnosis and hidden emotional responses.

Conclusion: Exploring the experience of having a young family when diagnosed with breast cancer will increase our understanding of the complex nature of the family adjustment and how children in these families move through their mother’s diagnosis.