

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY IN WOMEN WITH BREAST CANCER AT THE FIRST ONCOLOGY CONSULTATION AFTER SURGERY

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Introduction: There is evidence that women with breast cancer can develop anxiety and depression, ultimately affecting patients' compliance and quality of life.

Objectives: Previous studies investigated psychological distress in women with breast cancer at different stages of the disease. However, few data are available about Italian women in the early steps of their clinical history.

Aims: To investigate psychological distress, anxiety and depressive symptoms in a sample of women with a recent diagnosis of breast cancer.

Methods: This cross-sectional study involved twenty-five women consecutively attending the oncology outpatient clinic for their first oncology evaluation after surgery. Anxious and depressive symptomatology was assessed through the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) and Distress Thermometer (DT). Socio-demographic and clinical characteristics were also collected. Correlations were analyzed using Spearman's correlation coefficient.

Results: The mean values (\pm SD) of the HADS Anxiety and Depression Subscales were 7.6 (\pm 4.7) and 5.7 (\pm 4.4) respectively. Five patients (24%) scored ≥ 10 at the HADS Anxiety subscale and 16% scored ≥ 10 at the HADS Depression subscale, suggesting the presence of clinically relevant symptomatology. DT mean score (\pm SD) was 5.36 (\pm 3.5), with 48% of patients scoring ≥ 7 , indicative of significant psychological distress. Multivariate analysis showed an inverse correlation between psychological distress severity and time after cancer diagnosis.

Conclusions: These preliminary findings show a prevalence of anxious and depressive symptoms in one out four women with breast cancer. Further prosecution of the study will help to identify women at risk for psychiatric comorbidities, suggesting the development of targeted interventions.