

Breast Cancer and Support Therapy

Challenges

Women who have been diagnosed with some form of breast cancer will experience many challenges, both physical and psychological. Here are some of the possible difficulties ahead:

- Emotional reaction to the news
- Denying the condition exists
- Potential relationship complications
- Need to integrate treatment with one's job requirements

Approaches to Therapy

There are numerous treatments for breast cancer, some of which are controversial. The most frequent strategy is a combination of the modalities listed below:

- Surgery
- Radiation / chemotherapy
- Medication (e.g., Tamoxifen)
- Hormone replacement
- Psychological support

Psychological Treatment

Including some form of psychological care in the treatment plan can take several forms, among which are the following:

- Individual assessment
- Consultation with clinicians
- Individual psychotherapy
- Couples therapy
- Group therapy

How Psychological Support Can Help

Cancer in any part of the body can be frightening. Women often have serious emotional difficulties in dealing with this diagnosis, particularly when they are told they have breast cancer. Psychological support offers a number of benefits to women who are having trouble coping with this condition or are in denial about it. Here are some of the major ways support can help:

- Clearing out myths about cancer
- Coping with rapid onset of menopause
- Dealing with mood changes
- Addressing the challenges of aging and mortality
- Strengthening one's body image
- Experiencing sexual attractiveness
- Strengthening self concept
- Increased acceptance

Lori A. Futterman, Ph.D.
591 Camino de la Reina, Suite 705
San Diego, California 92108
619/297-3311