

Postoperative Psychological Morbidity of Breast Cancer Strongly Related to Treatment Decision Making Difficulties

Breast Cancer is the third cancer killer among female in Hong Kong and is more often found in females aged 50 or above.

Breast Cancer is different from other cancers in that patients are given more surgery choices, all the treatments for breast cancer are with similar survival rates and risk factors. A study by the Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong, found that patients' post surgery psychological morbidity is strongly linked to their treatment decision making (TDM) difficulties.

It is found that during the first week after surgery, 28% and 42% of women had mild and moderate-to-severe psychological morbidity (slightly decreased after one month) respectively. Also the results showed that one-week post-surgery distress was a significant predictor of subsequent psychological distress.

The study also found that TDM difficulties and outcome expectation strongly predicted postoperative and follow-up psychological morbidity. Therefore, the best way to reduce psychological morbidity is to optimize TDM support and help women accurately predict the outcomes in terms of symptom experience and physical appearance. Hence more proactive involvement of surgeon by providing decision making support on treatment recommendation is preferred.