PIII-3: Distress Associated with the Diagnostic Phase for Suspected Breast Cancer: A Systematic Review

Author List:
Presenting Author: Mariann M. Montgomery
Additional Author:

Presenting Author: Mariann M Montgomery

Address: 314 Cross St.
Newcomerstown, Ohio 43832
United States
Ph: 740-492-1176
Fax:
Email: mmontgo5@kent.edu
Institution: West Virginia University

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Abstract:
Introduction: Raising the possibility that a malignancy might be present is threatening. The resulting distress is believed to influence treatment outcomes in those diagnosed with cancer and result in behavioral changes in those with benign disease. The aim of this review is to evaluate quantitative measures of distress associated with the threat of potential cancer during the diagnostic phase for suspected breast cancer and identify factors impacting levels distress.

Method(s): Research papers published between January 1983 and May 2009 were identified in CINAHL, MEDLINE and PsycINFO. The search was performed using standardized systematic search methods with the following terms: breast cancer diagnosis, mammography, breast biopsy, breast diagnostic, anxiety, distress, and uncertainty. Thirty studies met the inclusion criteria of having at using a quantitative study design with at least one standardized measure of distress and being specifically concerned with distress during the evaluation period.

Results: It is well-documented that distress, manifested as anxiety, exists. There was strong evidence for a relationship between a lack of educational information and higher levels of trait anxiety being associated with heightened anxiety. Immune factors tested in a few studies are potential correlates. Methodological flaws detracted from many studies’ generalizability.

Discussion & Conclusions: It is necessary to understand the impact of related factors so that a profile for predicting heightened levels of anxiety can be defined. Once these factors are identified, then targeted interventions to reduce anxiety can be initiated at the first mention of the possibility of the presence of malignancy.
Abstract History:

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No, I (or a member of my immediate family) have not received something of value* from or own stock (or stock options) in a commercial company or institution related directly or indirectly to the subject of my presentation.

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Submitted by:
mmontgo5@kent.edu