

INVESTIGATION OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL AND EMBODIED EXPERIENCE OF BREAST CANCER IN THE CONTEXT OF HORMONAL THERAPY

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Abstract

Breast cancer is one of the most common oncological diseases among women. This article examines the impact of hormonal therapy in the treatment of breast cancer on the psychosocial perception of the female body. Given the sensitivity of this topic, the study aims to encourage open discussion and reflection.

Keywords

Breast cancer, hormonal therapy, female body

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПСИХОСОЦИАЛЬНОГО И ТЕЛЕСНОГО ОПЫТА ВЛИЯНИЯ ЗАБОЛЕВАНИЯ РАКОМ МОЛОЧНОЙ ЖЕЛЕЗЫ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ГОРМОНАЛЬНОЙ ТЕРАПИИ

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Аннотация

Рак молочной железы является одним из наиболее распространенных онкологических заболеваний среди женщин. В статье исследуется влияние лечения гормональной терапией при заболевании раком молочной железы на психо-социальное восприятие женского тела. В условиях сензитивности данной темы исследование может послужить поводом для открытого обсуждения

Ключевые слова

Рак молочной железы, гормональная терапия, женское тело

Introduction

Breast cancer remains one of the most prevalent oncological diseases among women. According to data from Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat). and analytical reports for 2025 in Russia, breast cancer accounts for approximately 20–22% of all malignant neoplasms diagnosed in women. Contemporary medicine employs a range of treatment strategies, including chemotherapy, surgical intervention and hormonal therapy. This study focuses specifically on hormonal therapy as a long-term, systemically acting form of treatment.

Hormonal therapy is based on blocking estrogen and progesterone – key hormones involved not only in reproductive processes but also in shaping bodily sensitivity, libido and emotional stability [1]. This gives rise to the central research question: how does undergoing hormonal therapy for breast cancer affect the psychosocial perception of the female body under conditions of hormonal deprivation?

Main part

The study is based on a series of individual online interviews with 5 women who had undergone with hormonal therapy, as well as consultations with specialists in psychotherapy and sociology with their own practical experience working with oncology patients.

According to article from 2023, within a focus group of 56 women, 62.5% reported difficulties in their sense of bodily self-perception following therapy. Many participants emphasized the need for greater access to information and support in addressing these challenges [2].

Own research employed a set of interview questions designed to investigate the central research problem. In conversations with oncology patients, the focus was placed on their personal bodily and emotional perceptions following therapy, while consultations with specialists allowed for synthesis of observations based on professional practice and recurring types of clinical requests. The analysis of the collected material aimed to identify recurring semantic patterns in the descriptions of bodily and emotional experience. The research focused on the ways in which women articulate changes in their bodies, transformations of identity, and the reconfiguration of social roles. As a result, the following recurring themes were identified:

- fear of openly discussing the diagnosis;
- shifts in perception within social environments;
- changes in the perception of one's own body;
- loss of a sense of "femininity";
- denial of one's bodily experience;
- decreased libido and sexual desire, affecting intimate relationships and everyday life;
- emotional instability and heightened anxiety;
- internal conflict between one's former self-image and current bodily condition;
- anxiety and depressive reactions and their relationship to sexual functioning

Also the women who had undergone hormonal therapy also demonstrated higher levels of difficulty identifying emotions, a tendency toward externally oriented thinking and more pronounced negative affect [3].

These processes contribute to a marked psycho-emotional dissonance in which the body may no longer be experienced as one's own.

Conclusion

The results provide empirical support for the central research question regarding the effects of hormonal therapy in breast cancer treatment on the psychosocial perception of the female body. Moreover, the findings highlight the highly sensitive nature of this topic and emphasize the importance of rigorous academic investigation and critical discussion.

Literature

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