



Exploring the experiences and psychosocial support needs of informal carers of men with breast cancer

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To the Editor:

We read a recently published article titled, “Exploring the experiences and psychosocial support needs of informal carers of men with breast cancer: a qualitative study” by Herring et al. [1]. The authors concluded that the provision of emotional and practical support for a man diagnosed with breast cancer fell primarily on an informal carer, and this could be demanding and enduring [1]. Herein, we present a point of discussion regarding their conclusions.

Herring et al. indicated that all participants recognized the need for support for informal carers of men with breast cancer [1]. Moreover, they pointed out that the paucity of services contributed to additional caregiver burden [1]. We agree with this point and that formal service is important. Previous research showed that carers had greater activity impairment and higher caregiving burden with worsening performance status (PS) of the patient they cared for [2]. Another study showed that the risk factors for adverse mental health outcomes included the patient’s declining status and symptom distress [3]. Moreover, the symptoms of breast cancer were associated with caregiver burden. We wonder whether the patient’s PS and symptoms lead to a need for caregiver services. The authors also reported that they followed informal carers from the time of the patient’s diagnosis [1]. We believe that the time since diagnosis is also related to PS and the symptoms. Therefore, we are interested in the PS and symptoms of the subjects in this study.

The authors indicated that breast cancer, a primarily female disease, led to uncertainty regarding how best to discuss the diagnosis and support for a man [1]. This point is very important. We think that difficulty in consulting with others was due to the disease being perceived as a woman’s cancer. Therefore, we agree with the importance of support needs specific to male patients with breast cancer.

Undoubtedly, it is important to focus on the effect of an informal carer of men with breast cancer. The study conducted by Herring et al. provided useful data on the same. We believe that focusing on the experiences and psychosocial support needs among informal carers may support both patients and carers in the future.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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