

ATTITUDE OF POST-MASTECTOMY PATIENTS TOWARDS BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

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Introduction

Mastectomy is a mutilating but sometimes unavoidable surgical procedure indicated as primary treatment of breast cancer. It is associated with a significant physical and emotional distress.

Method

Fifty consecutive patients who underwent mastectomy from 01-01-2007 at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka were interviewed at 1 week, 3 months and 1 year postoperatively.

Results

None of the patients had thought of undergoing an immediate breast reconstruction and only one patient had been offered with the option. The main reason was the desire to get rid of the tumor soon, minimizing the risk of spread. At 3 months 92% (46) were wearing improvised external breast prosthesis. 74% of them were happy with the prosthesis and had not thought of reconstruction. The reasons were, not having enough information about the procedure 44% (15/34), not essential for physical and emotional well being 24% (8/34), perceiving themselves as being too old for the procedure 21% (7/34) and fear of undergoing another surgery which may carry undesirable complications 12% (4/34). Twelve (24%) patients were interested on undergoing a breast reconstruction but had not been offered it. All of them were less than 50 years and had not reached natural menopause. At 1 year 84% (42) was still happy with the prosthesis and had no interest to undergo breast reconstruction. Out of the 12 who considered breast reconstruction at 3 months three had given up the idea. The reason was that they were not adequately informed and offered the option.

Conclusions

None of the patients had undergone breast reconstruction during the period of follow up. Majority of patients were happy with external breast prosthesis. Pre-menopausal, younger women had a more positive attitude towards breast reconstruction and this positive attitude had changed with time mainly because the issue was not addressed by health care professionals at the correct time.

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