

THE FIGHT AGAINST BREAST CANCER: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT

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Abstract: This article reports the experience of a 60-year-old woman, living in a low-income community, who faced a battle with breast cancer. Initially, the disease was neglected and treated with home remedies, but when she sought medical help, she was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Despite medical recommendations, the patient chose not to undergo conventional treatment, following only palliative care. Family support played a crucial role in her decisions, influencing her choice to refuse surgery. However, the patient eventually withdrew from medical care, highlighting the need for a holistic approach and ongoing support for patients in similar situations. This report highlights the importance of raising awareness about breast cancer, early detection and adequate medical monitoring, as well as the need for emotional and psychological support for patients and their families throughout the treatment process.

Keywords: Breast cancer; Experience report; UBS.

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INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is one of the most prevalent and devastating forms of cancer faced by women around the world. This insidious disease not only represents a physical challenge, but it is also an emotional, mental and spiritual test for patients and their families. The journey of the fight against breast cancer is a complex narrative, full of ups and downs, moments of hope and despair, courage and vulnerability (Barbosa et al., 2020).

This struggle begins with detection, often marked by a shocking discovery during a routine examination or by disturbing symptoms that lead to seeking medical help. The confirmation of the diagnosis of breast cancer is a moment that deeply shakes the life of the patient and her loved ones, throwing them in a turbulence of emotions and uncertainties about the future (Lima et al., 2020).

Treatment of breast cancer is a long and challenging journey, usually involving a combination of surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy and immunotherapy. Each stage of treatment brings with it its own physical and emotional challenges, from the debilitating side effects of drugs to the concerns about the loss of female identity associated with mastectomy (Donnelly et al., 2018).

In addition to medical challenges, patients also face a number of psychosocial issues, including anxiety, depression, fear of recurrence, and changes in personal and professional relationships. Emotional support and holistic care are essential to helping patients navigate through these challenges and to remain resilient throughout the treatment process (Barbosa et al., 2020).

The battle against breast cancer is not only an individual battle, but also a collective battle involving the entire medical community, family, friends and support organizations. The love, support and solidarity of those around them play a fundamental role in strengthening patients and promoting their physical and emotional recovery (Lima et al., 2020).

However, even with all the support available, the journey of the battle against breast cancer is marked by moments of pain, anguish and loss. Many patients face the difficult reality of the progression



of the disease, the recurrence of cancer or the loss of loved ones to this terrible disease. Despite the challenges faced, women's resilience and courage in the fight against breast cancer are truly inspiring. Every story of survival is a proof of the strength of the human spirit and the determination to live fully, despite adversities (Lima et al., 2020).

OBJECTIVE

Report an experience experienced in the follow-up of a UBS user with breast cancer.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach to investigate the experience of a user of the Basic Health Unit (UBS) in the fight against breast cancer. The participant was selected based on inclusion criteria that considered her breast cancer diagnosis and her history of interaction with UBS health services.

The data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, allowing the participant to freely share their journey from diagnosis to treatment and care received at UBS. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis, ensuring the truthfulness of the information and the accuracy in the interpretation of the reports.

In addition to the interviews, medical records and other relevant documents available at UBS were consulted to complement and enrich the data obtained during interviews. This triangulation of data sources contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the participant's experience in the fight against breast cancer and its interaction with UBS health services.

The data analysis followed an inductive approach, using content analysis techniques to identify patterns, topics and insights emerging in the participant's reports. The data were encoded and categorized according to the main aspects of the participant's experience, including the diagnosis process,



treatment decisions, challenges faced and the positive and negative side of the care received at UBS.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, measures have been taken to promote the credibility and consistency of the data, including peer review and the search for convergence and divergence points in the participant's reports. In addition, the ethical principles of research were respected, guaranteeing informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality of the data of the participant.

DISCUSSIONS

The experience of the patient in question reveals a number of challenges faced by women with modest resources in accessing health care, especially when diagnosed with breast cancer. The delay in seeking medical help due to the initial attempt of home treatments, such as the application of Rabelo tea and water, is a reflection of the socio-economic and educational barriers that can influence the early diagnosis of the disease. As observed by Youlden et al. (2018), women in urban areas and with lower socio-economic levels are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer in advanced stages, which can result in less favourable prognoses.

The patient's decision to refuse conventional treatment in favour of palliative care is an example of how cultural and family support factors can influence treatment choices. Research by Donnelly et al. (2018) highlights the importance of social support and effective communication between patients, relatives and health professionals in making decisions about breast cancer treatment. However, resistance to acceptance of referral to specialist care, as observed in this case, may result in limitations in access to more advanced and multidisciplinary therapies, such as oncological surgery and adjuvant therapy.

The dedication of the patient to attend regular cleansing procedures in the basic health unit highlights the importance of continuous and accessible support for patients with advanced breast cancer. However, the subsequent interruption of such care highlights the challenges faced by patients in dealing with the emotional and physical complexities associated with the treatment of the disease. According



to Gupta et al. (2019), psychosocial barriers, such as cancer stigma and fear of the unknown, can play a significant role in the adherence and discontinuity of breast cancer treatment.

The change in patient behavior in relation to medical care highlights the need for a holistic and sensitive approach in the treatment of advanced breast cancer. It is essential that health professionals recognize and address the social, cultural and emotional factors that can influence treatment choices and adherence to medical care. As stressed by Andersen et al. (2018), providing patient-centred care, with an emphasis on open communication, emotional support and decision-making collaboration, is key to improving the outcomes and quality of life of patients with advanced breast cancer.

CONCLUSION

After a detailed analysis of the patient's experience facing breast cancer, the complexity and challenges faced by women in similar situations are evident. The trajectory of this patient highlighted the importance of early access to health care and awareness of the signs and symptoms of breast cancer, especially in modest resource communities. The patient's resistance to conventional treatment and her search for home remedies underline the need for more holistic and culturally sensitive health approaches that take into account the individual values and beliefs of patients.

In addition, the dedication of the patient to attend palliative care procedures in the basic health unit underlines the importance of continuous and accessible support for patients with advanced breast cancer. However, his subsequent withdrawal from medical care highlights the challenges faced by patients throughout the treatment process, including the emotional, social and cultural barriers that can influence their decisions.

This study reinforces the need for a multidisciplinary and patient-centred approach to breast cancer treatment. Health professionals should be aware of the individual complexities faced by each patient and seek customized strategies to provide appropriate support. Furthermore, it is crucial to pro-



mote public awareness of the importance of early diagnosis and access to health care, with a view to improving the outcomes and quality of life of women affected by breast cancer.

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