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Usage of complementary and alternative therapies in breast cancer patients

Demirsoy G

Adnan Menderes University, Turkey

Frequent occurrence of breast cancer, low survival rate, many side effects of treatments and women's health-seeking behavior have caused to increase the usage of complementary and alternative therapies (CAM). In Turkey, breast cancer patients often resorted to CAM methods, but they are tested by limited studies and gain results which do not answer well how frequently they were used and problems were experienced. In this study, we aimed to determine the usage of complementary and alternative treatments in breast cancer patients. This descriptive study comprises data from a total of 518 members who got breast cancer diagnosis of an association with cancer. We did not do sampling, but we only reached 437 members who agreed to fill out the questionnaire. Data were taken by the questionnaire consisting of 28 questions developed by the researchers and collected via the internet. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis. It was determined that the majority of women participating in the study were in the 40-49 age group, married, graduated from university, income and expenses were equivalent and had stage 2 breast cancer. Mostly biological approaches after diagnostic were preferred. 48.7% of women were reported that they used CAM. In the 40-49 age group, married, equivalent income and expenses and patients with second phase in breast cancer have used CAM in the past and now higher than the other groups. The most used CAM method was herbal products for treatment. All the CAM users have used at least one herbal method. Women who were in the survey mostly used CAM because of preventing from symptoms. 70% of women also expressed that it partially allowed their recovery. Women got advices and recommendations about CAM methods from their family members (29.6%) and their knowledge (29.6%). The women participating in this study had problems with its costs, conflicting with the treatment and problems such as difficulty to reach more information about methods and lack of access to these methods. 56.3% of CAM users did not share their situation about CAM with health professionals during their treatments, but they also expressed that they would like to receive counseling about CAM methods during treatment. As a result, the majority of breast cancer patients used many CAM methods. If the factors such as age, education, stage and income increase, using CAM also increases, and approximately half of the patients did not share the status of using CAM methods with their medical staff. Medical staffs who take care of breast cancer patients need to question the status of CAM use, find out a way to share their status and give adequate consulting and also must have sufficient information to guide patients.