

Occupational Roles: Chilean Women's Experiences Living with Breast Cancer.

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Introduction

This qualitative study explored the experiences on occupational roles from some Chilean women after treatment for breast cancer. Since this study is one of the first addressing patients with breast cancer from the occupational perspective it might contribute with knowledge on how these women could achieve deeper satisfaction and well-being.

Objective

To explore the experiences on occupational roles among Chilean women after treatment for breast cancer.

Methodology

Six women, ages ranged from 38 to 62 participated. All of them had been diagnosed 24 months earlier and they had completed their initial breast cancer treatment.

Data was gathered through semi structured interviews and were analyzed using a constant comparative method.

Findings

Three major themes relating to occupational roles emerged from the analysis:

a. Maintaining the multiplicity of occupational roles they have always had. b. Change or adequacy of their priorities and c. Disturbances in the intimate relationships.

The findings identified that women who have been treated for breast cancer might give great importance to their occupations and how their occupational roles are performed. In spite of having a life-threatening illness the participants made efforts to continue fulfilling these roles. In fact, they experienced that their nucleus families showed insufficient collaboration regarding their Occupational Roles, which could be interpreted as a culturally ingrained attitude, or as negation of their illness.

Conclusion

This study showed that occupational roles are an area of concern for women affected by breast cancer. Further the study showed that attention to occupational roles might be crucial to achieve participation and well being for women in this situation.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy:

Given that women with breast cancer is a big group both internationally and in Chile, and the disease have a big impact on everyday occupational lives, studies addressing this group is of great importance clinical practice. The knowledge gained contributes to the development of a research base for occupational therapy services addressing this group.