Advances in Endocrine Therapy for Breast Cancer: Considering Efficacy, Safety, and Quality of Life

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Breast cancer is the most common cancer found in women in the United States. Endocrine therapy is the standard of care for most women with hormone receptor-positive tumors in adjuvant and metastatic settings. The selective estrogen response modifier tamoxifen has been the standard treatment for postmenopausal patients for many years. Numerous new endocrine therapy agents provide women with novel treatment options, including the nonsteroidal aromatase inhibitors anastrozole and letrozole, the steroidal aromatase inhibitor exemestane, and the estrogen receptor antagonist fulvestrant. Clinical trials have begun to define the role of these agents and their unique side-effect profiles. Nurses are vital in supporting patients in the decision-making process, managing side effects of treatment, and making observations to enhance understanding of the patient experience with new treatments. This article will assist nurses in educating patients about endocrine therapy options and their associated potential short- and long-term side effects, as well as treatment demands.

Key Words: breast neoplasms, estrogen receptor modulators

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