Breast Cancer Survivors and Sexuality: A Review of the Literature Concerning Sexual Functioning, Assessment Tools, and Evidence-Based Interventions

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Background: Most breast cancer survivors (BCSs) experience sexual dysfunction from treatment-induced hormonal changes, making sexual assessment an important component of survivorship care. However, because many oncology healthcare providers do not perform such assessment, a number of BCSs endure unidentified sexual dysfunction. Barriers to assessment faced by providers must be identified, and further research should examine the perspectives of BCSs and their partners regarding preferences for sexual assessment and interventions.

Objectives: The purpose of this literature review was to explore tools used to assess sexual functioning and evidence-based interventions used to treat sexual dysfunction in BCSs.

Methods: Articles published from 2003–2013 that reported on the effects of breast cancer and its treatment on sexual functioning in BCSs and located through online database searches (PubMed, the Cochrane Library, MEDLINE®, CINAHL®) were reviewed.

Findings: Sexual dysfunction is a common problem among BCSs. Using various assessment tools, providers should regularly assess sexual functioning in BCSs during and after treatment to improve quality of life for BCSs and their partners.