Chemobrain in Underserved African American Breast Cancer Survivors: A Qualitative Study

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Although research has been conducted to address specific medical and psychosocial needs of breast cancer survivors, little has been done to address needs along the entire trajectory of care. One such need is chemobrain, a phenomenon recognized as an identifiable psychosocial cognitive change in breast cancer survivors. The purpose of this article is to present the findings of a qualitative study conducted with two focus groups of underserved African American breast cancer survivors. Four themes emerged from the transcribed interviews: the concept of chemobrain, variability among individuals, the stigma of chemobrain, and methods of coping. In addition, findings revealed that health professionals were not used by the participants as a resource to address the issues of chemobrain, which holds significant implications for practice. That fact highlights the implications for oncology nursing with respect to providing education and support for patients experiencing chemobrain. Nursing professionals are in a position to be a frontline resource for breast cancer survivors, providing information, education, and coping methods to help improve their quality of life.

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