

Decisional factors influencing breast reconstruction post-mastectomy

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Study Overview

For many women, receiving a breast cancer diagnosis is complicated by decisions about breast reconstruction post-mastectomy. The Cancer Support Community (CSC) sought to better understand the role of decision-making in a national survey. 1,185 women with breast cancer responded to questions in 2010-11. Women reported decision regarding reconstruction, and extent to which various psychosocial factors influenced their decision. Participants who chose reconstruction generally rated body image (70.3%) and physical appearance (73.0%) as influencing their decision "a great deal", compared to women who chose to not undergo reconstruction, who were less likely to rate these factors as "a great deal" influential (22.4% and 25.2% respectively). Participants who chose to not undergo reconstruction reported concerns about poor outcomes or side effects of procedures (65.8%) and concerns about additional procedures (63.2%) as influencing their decision "a great deal", whereas women who opted for reconstruction were less likely to report these concerns as "a great deal" influential (20% and 22.1%, respectively). This study provides new insight into the relative weight of factors influencing this often challenging decision-making process.

Survey Objectives

- To better understand which psychosocial factors affect decision-making around breast reconstruction in women diagnosed with breast cancer
- To explore how these factors affect decision-making and the relative weight of these decisional factors
- To inform the development of a new national patient education and empowerment program by CSC

Program Background

This survey was conducted by CSC to inform the development of *Frankly Speaking About Cancer: Breast Reconstruction*, a clinically-facilitated national education program streamlining information about breast reconstruction options, emphasizing up-front education and tools for decision-making. This evidence-based program encourages women to speak openly with physicians about whether reconstruction is right for them. In its first year (2011), the program served over 500 women and their loved ones attending 34 workshops nationwide. *Frankly Speaking About Cancer: Breast Reconstruction* is part of the larger *Frankly Speaking About Cancer* (FSAC) educational series, created in 2001. Programs provide an in-depth look into a variety of concerns cancer patients and their loved ones face following a diagnosis. Guided by the Patient Empowerment concept, FSAC program materials, represent the most up-to-date content and offer a unique, comprehensive array of information in multiple formats.

Methods

Participants

1,185 women with breast cancer

- 840 respondents to the online version of the CSC Survey, in July/August, 2010. Respondents recruited through CSC's Cancer Experience Registry, advocacy partners, social media, email, flyers, and at CSC affiliates
- 345 attendees of CSC's FSAC, *Breast Reconstruction* workshops at CSC affiliates nationwide completed survey via paper and pencil in 2011

Sampling note: Online respondents were more likely to be Caucasian, less likely to have been recently (less than one year) diagnosed with breast cancer, and more likely to have already made a decision regarding reconstruction, as compared to workshop attendees, but were similar in all other respects for these analyses.

Survey Measure

Self-report instrument assessing:

- Demographics, cancer history, cancer treatment
- Decision regarding breast reconstruction
- The extent to which 15 psychosocial factors have influenced their decision (3-point scale: "not at all", "somewhat", "a great deal")
- Details of the decision-making process, decisional satisfaction

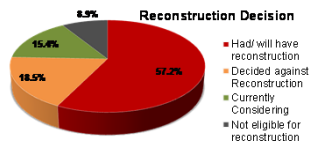
Respondent Characteristics

(n= 1,185 women with breast cancer)

- 81.9% were Caucasian
- 11.7% African-American; 10.2% Hispanic; 2.9% Asian
- Average age was 48.9 years
- 21.3% received their diagnosis in the past year; 30.0% were diagnosed > 5 years ago
- 79.1% were diagnosed with early stage (0, I or II) disease
- 27.4% have had a recurrence
- 41.7% are currently undergoing cancer treatment
- Most have had surgery (74.5%) and chemotherapy (61.9%), and 39.5% have had radiation

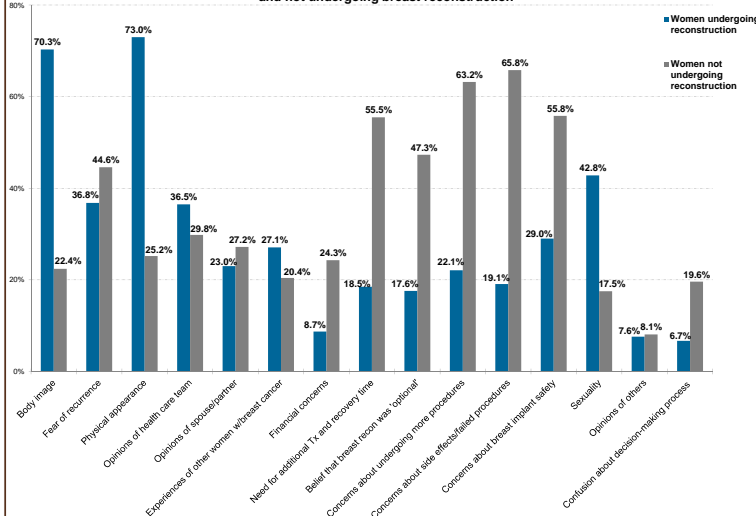
Decision Regarding Breast Reconstruction

- 18.5% reported they had decided against reconstruction
- 15.4% were considering their options
- 57.2% planned to undergo or had undergone reconstructive procedures
- 8.9% were not eligible for reconstruction



Factors Affecting Decision-making

Factors influencing reconstruction decision "a great deal" among women undergoing and not undergoing breast reconstruction



Differences in the weighting of various psychosocial factors between those who decided to undergo reconstruction, decided against reconstruction, and are still considering their options

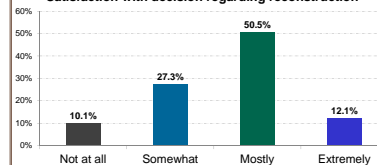
- Respondents who chose reconstruction generally rated body image (70.3%) and physical appearance (73.0%) as influencing their decision "a great deal", significantly greater than those who had not chosen reconstruction
- Women who chose to not undergo reconstruction reported concerns about poor outcomes or side effects of procedures (65.8%) and concerns about additional procedures (63.2%) as influencing their decision "a great deal", significantly greater than those who have decided to undergo reconstruction
- For those currently considering reconstruction, physical appearance and concerns about side effects greatly influenced participants (60.7% and 52.7%, respectively). These individuals also had the largest percentage of respondents endorsing experiences of other women with breast cancer (66.1%) as "somewhat" influential in their decision
- Approximately 60% of all women reported that financial considerations were "not at all" an influence on their decision.

Psychosocial Factor	F	Signif.
Body image	83.9	<.01
Fear of recurrence	5.8	<.01
Physical appearance	70.0	<.01
Opinions of healthcare team	1.6	n.s.
Opinions of spouse/ partner	.94	n.s.
Experiences of other women with breast cancer	1.8	n.s.
Financial concerns	19.6	<.01
Need for additional Tx and recovery	45.7	<.01
Belief that breast reconstruction was 'optional'	17.8	<.01
Concerns about undergoing more procedures	37.8	<.01
Concerns about side-effects/ failed procedures	48.8	<.01
Concerns about breast implant safety	13.9	<.01
Sexuality	24.8	<.01
Opinions of others	1.8	n.s.
Confusion about decision-making process	16.6	<.01

Other Findings

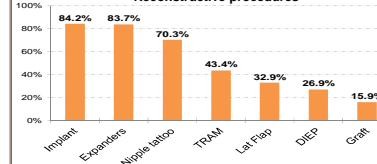
- Women who opted for reconstruction were younger than those who chose to not undergo breast reconstruction (t = -3.74, p < .01).
- Of women who had made a decision regarding reconstruction, the majority (62.6%) were "mostly" or "extremely" satisfied with their decision.

Satisfaction with decision regarding reconstruction



- Most who have undergone reconstruction have had implants and expanders.

Reconstructive procedures



- 73.5% of respondents reported satisfaction (on 4-point scale) with their the outcome of the procedure(s)

Summary

- Results of this national survey offer unique insight into the relative weight of psychosocial factors in this often challenging decision-making process for women, suggesting different factors are important for those who decide to undergo reconstruction, those who decide against it, and for those who are still considering reconstruction.
- Whereas factors related to physical appearance and body image strongly influence decisions for those who decide to undergo reconstruction, concerns about side effects and the need for additional procedures most strongly influence those who decide against reconstruction
- Women considering breast reconstruction options are influenced by a multitude of factors related to uncertainty about outcomes

Applications

- Survey results have informed the development of a national patient educational program, being run across the country, entitled *Frankly Speaking About Cancer: Breast Reconstruction*
- With a clearer understanding of how multiple psychosocial factors affect decision-making, providers (and caregivers) can best address the concerns and informational needs of women faced with decisions about reconstruction and tailor discussions to the individual. Thus, these results can greatly inform clinical practice

Future Directions

- Continue to meet the informational and support needs of breast cancer patients facing decisions about breast reconstruction and their loved ones
- Regularly review evaluation data to inform future iterations of psychoeducational program and materials

For More Information Contact CSC: 1-888-793-9355 or go to www.cancersupportcommunity.org

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