

Poster Presentation 22

CHRONIC PAIN AFTER BREAST SURGERY

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Introduction

Chronic pain following breast cancer surgery (CPBS), though initially considered rare has a reported incidence of over 50%. It can give considerable disability and psychological distress to a patient if not detected during follow up. More patients are surviving with breast cancer due to advances made in diagnosis and treatment, making the population at risk for CPBS expected to increase in the future.

Method

Study was to identify the prevalence of CPBS in 50 consecutive patients who underwent modified radical mastectomy at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka from 01-06-2007. They were assessed at 1 week, 3 and 6 months post-operatively.

Results

At 1 week post-op, 15(30%) patients had numbness, which was associated with acute pain in 6. Another 9 had acute pain alone. One (2%) complained of a single episode of phantom breast sensation (PBS). At 3 months post-op 6 (12%) had developed intercostobrachial neuralgia, three (6%) had neuroma pain. One (2%) without pain at 1 week post-op had phantom breast pain (PBP). At 6 months one more patient had intercostobrachial neuralgia making the total 7 (14%) and 2 of the 3 (4%) continued with neuroma pain. The patient with PBP/PBS remained to do so. Only 4 (8%) patients considered the pain disturbing. Development of CPBS was significantly associated with the presence of acute post operative pain ($P = 0.0479$).

Conclusions

Various forms of CPBS were found in 20% of the population studied. The pain was not disabling in the majority. It makes us aware that this aspect needs to be considered in the follow up of post mastectomy patients.