

Q 21: Phantom breast pain and chronic pain after mastectomy

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- Objectives:**
1. To determine prevalence of phantom breast pain/sensation (PBP/PBS) and chronic pain after breast surgery (CPBS) in patients undergoing mastectomy.
 2. To determine factors affecting its occurrence and the course.
 3. To assess the impact of CPBS on the quality of life.

Methods: A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted on patients who underwent mastectomy at NHSL from 01-06-2007 to 01-06-2008. 66 patients were studied. Patients were assessed on discharge, at 3, 6 and 12 months post-operatively using an interviewer administered structured pre tested questionnaire. Patients were questioned regarding post operative chronic breast pain, phantom breast pain, numbness, and its impact on their life. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. SPSS 15 was used for analysis.

Results: Prevalence of chronic pain at surgical site at 3 months was 19 (28%). It reduced to 14 (22%) and 12 (18%) by 6 and 12 months. Development of CPBS was significantly associated with the presence of acute post operative pain ($P < 0.05$). Incidence of PBS was 3% and PBP was 1.5% at 3 months. The presence of pre operative breast pain was not significantly associated with development of PBS/PBP ($P=0.3633$).

Conclusion: Chronic pain following mastectomy is a common condition, sometimes severe enough to significantly reduce quality of life. It is important not only to treat pain during surgery, but also to detect it during post operative follow-up and provide treatment. PBS and PBP are relatively rare conditions.