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The Environmental Characteristics of Young Breast Cancer Survivors

Yun Hu, PhD, RN

School of Nursing, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

Purpose:

Young breast cancer survivors face the issues that differ widely from their elderly counterparts. However, little is known about the whole ecological environments of young breast cancer survivors, especially in China. The purpose of this study is to explore the environmental characteristics of young breast cancer survivors in China.

Methods:

A purposive sampling was used to recruit 7 participants who were aged 18 to 45 years, diagnosed with breast cancer within the past 5 years, and residing in Shanghai. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in a quiet office. A content analysis was used to analyze the data in order to explore dramatically changing environments of young breast cancer survivors in China. The social-ecological model was used as the framework for the data analysis.

Results:

Themes in four major areas described the characteristics of ecological environments of young breast cancer survivors in China. First, in terms of individual environments, five themes were found: (a) changes in the attitudes from fear to acceptance (with the knowledge change); (b) calm, but sensitive emotions; (c) coping with physical symptoms, (d) caring about body image; (e) changing lifestyles after analyzing the disease; and (f) concerns on individual role achievement such as pregnancy and marriage. Second, in terms of interpersonal environments, four themes were found: (a) reflections on relationship with children; (b) supports from families, friends and colleagues, especially parents; (c) feeling guilty for parents; and (d) worrying about daughters and mothers. Third, in terms of community environments, two themes were found: (a) making the new connections with outside worlds; (b) developing interests and joining related groups; and (c) avoiding interactions with neighbors. Finally, in terms of social environments, three themes were found: (a) social stigma attached to the disease; (b) worrying about job hunting; and (c) asymmetric information about the public health insurance in China.

Conclusion:

The study provides insights into specific environmental issues of these young breast cancer survivors in different levels of environments. Nonetheless, individual, interpersonal, community and social concerns must be addressed so that the survivorship experience of these young breast cancer survivors will continue to be resilient.

Title:

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Keywords:

breast cancer survivors, environment and young

Abstract Summary:

The study described the characteristics of ecological environmental of young breast cancer survivors in China. 7 participants were recruited by theoretical sampling. The content analysis was used as the method for data analysis. Themes included the following four majors: individual environment, interpersonal environment, community environment, and social environment.

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First Primary Presenting Author***Primary Presenting Author***

Yun Hu, PhD, RN

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

School of Nursing

Shanghai

China

Author Summary: Dr. Yun Hu is a faculty at School of Nursing, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China. She got her PhD from School of Nursing, The Secondary Military Medical University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China. She has worked as a visiting scholar and project coordinator at School of Nursing, Duke University, from 2016 to 2017.