

## The impact of sleep on the lives of women who have breast cancer-related lymphedema: a qualitative analysis

**Authors:** Karen J Bock, Clinical Instructor, University of Kansas Medical Center, [kbock2@kumc.edu](mailto:kbock2@kumc.edu); Kristen Kelly, SPT, Department of physical therapy, rehabilitation science, and athletic training, University of Kansas Medical Center; Delainey Pospichal, SPT, Department of physical therapy, rehabilitation science, and athletic training, University of Kansas Medical Center; Catherine F. Siengsukon, PT, PhD, DBSM, department of physical therapy, rehabilitation science, and athletic training, University of Kansas Medical Center; Jill Peltzer, PhD, APRN-CNS, School of Nursing, University of Kansas Medical Center

**Introduction:** Breast cancer survivors have many lifelong symptoms of anxiety, depression, lymphedema, and fatigue that can be exacerbated by sleep disturbance. Little is known about unique factors contributing to sleep disturbance among breast cancer survivors with lymphedema; this requires further investigation to offer appropriate support and treatment to these individuals.

**Aims:** The objective of this study was to capture perceptions and experiences of lymphedema and sleep among breast cancer survivors with lymphedema.

**Method:** Qualitative description, as part of a mixed methods investigation to characterize sleep disturbance among breast cancer survivors with and without lymphedema guided data collection and analysis. The participants were interviewed one-on-one using a semi-structured interview guide. Inductive content analysis was completed using an iterative coding approach, condensing, and categorizing to develop four themes.

**Results:** Seven breast cancer survivors with lymphedema participated. From their narratives, four themes were developed: 1) mind and body fatigue were exacerbated by sleep disturbance; 2) fatigue impacted fragile coping and support systems; 3) fatigue influenced self-identity and roles in society; and 4) self-management strategies were used for sleep health.

**Conclusion:** The participants' perceptions of sleep disturbances' impact on their lives endorse further investigation into optimal interventions to improve sleep quality and modify these impactful findings to create a higher quality of life for survivorship.