

Breast cancer rehabilitation program development and implementation into Croatian health care system - EDUMaRe

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Introduction: Although modern methods of breast cancer treatment have increased survival rates, they have also increased frequency of treatment complications. If these complications are not detected and treated in a timely manner, they cause permanent damage which ultimately led to a decrease in the functionality and quality of life of the affected women. The available literature points the need for education of women undergoing breast cancer treatment by adequately trained health personnel, in order to prevent side effects and improve the quality of life. Despite the available evidence on the positive effects of rehabilitation, in clinical practice, rehabilitation programs are rarely implemented. As far as we know, there are no guidelines for rehabilitation in Croatia, no adequate educational material, and no rehabilitation protocols have been implemented. Therefore, in order to ensure early diagnosis and rehabilitation of breast cancer treatment complications National Lymphoedema Framework Croatia (NLFC) and University Department of Health Studies University of Split developed Breast Cancer Rehabilitation Program.

Aims: To develop educational materials for breast cancer rehabilitation and to provide educational workshops for health care professionals in order to ensure implementation of evidence-based practice management in Croatian health care system.

Method: After conducting thorough search of literature concerning cancer rehabilitation and health care professionals' educational material was developed including information about breast cancer treatment complications, rehabilitation protocol, self-drainage and advice on proper diet, exercise and skin care. Protocol for providing health care professionals education was developed. First educational activities will be held among physician, nurses and physiotherapist working at Oncology, Plastic Surgery and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation departments. In order to assess the knowledge and impact of provided educational materials and activities survey will be conducted before and after the intervention.

Results: Educational material eligibility was tested among 30 patients before undergoing breast cancer surgery at University Hospital Split in 2022. According to results of conducted survey provided rehabilitation protocol was easy to understand and follow. Supplied data about breast cancer complications as well as exercises, skin care and diet advice were found to be sufficient, comprehensive and useful. First educational activities for health professionals will be provided in June 2023.

Conclusion: The creation of educational materials on the rehabilitation of women with breast cancer and conduction of educational activities will enable a better scientifically based education of health care professionals and will contribute to the optimisation and

standardisation of the rehabilitation of breast cancer patients in Croatian health care institutions.

References:

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