

# Transition From Treatment to Survivorship: Effects of a Psychoeducational Intervention on Quality of Life in Breast Cancer Survivors

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**Purpose/Objectives:** To examine the effectiveness of a psychoeducational intervention on quality of life (QOL) in breast cancer survivors in post-treatment survivorship.

**Design:** A randomized controlled trial.

**Setting:** An academic center collaborating with a regional cancer center in the southeastern United States.

**Sample:** 256 breast cancer survivors.

**Methods:** Women were randomly assigned to the experimental or wait control group. The Breast Cancer Education Intervention (BCEI) study was delivered in three face-to-face sessions and five monthly follow-up sessions (three by telephone and two in person). The control group received four monthly attention control telephone calls and the BCEI at month 6. Data were collected at baseline, three and six months after the BCEI for the experimental group, and one month after the BCEI (at month 7) for the wait control group.

**Main Research Variables:** Primary endpoints were overall QOL and physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being.

**Findings:** No differences in QOL were reported at baseline between groups. The experimental group reported improved QOL at three months, whereas the wait control group reported a significant decline in QOL. The experimental group reported continued maintenance of QOL at six months. Although the wait control group reported improved QOL at six months, significant differences continued to exist between the groups.

**Conclusions:** The BCEI was an effective intervention in improving QOL during the first year of breast cancer survivorship. Treatment effects were durable over time.

**Implications for Nursing:** Post-treatment survivorship has not been empirically studied to a large degree. The BCEI is one of the few interventions demonstrating effectiveness among survivors after primary treatment, suggesting that oncology nurses may be uniquely positioned to provide safe passage using education and support.

Quality of life (QOL) during post-treatment breast cancer survivorship is a relatively new, emerging, and promising area of investigation. Numerous multidisciplinary studies conducted since the 1980s have documented QOL in several domains, including physical function, psychological distress, social and family concerns, and spiritual issues, among breast cancer survivors. Behavioral interventions to ameliorate QOL problems include a wide variety of methods such as psychoeducational support, individual and group counseling, expressive therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council,

## Key Points . . .

- ▶ Few randomized controlled trials have been conducted addressing the transition from treatment to survivorship among patients with cancer.
- ▶ Psychoeducational support interventions are demonstrated to be effective.
- ▶ The Breast Cancer Education Intervention, a psychoeducational support intervention designed for breast cancer survivors, can improve quality of life.

2004). The preponderance of behavioral interventions has been delivered primarily during active cancer treatment. A small but growing number of multidisciplinary studies have reported interventions designed for the transition from cancer treatment to cancer survivorship.

The primary purpose of this article is to report the results of the effects of the Breast Cancer Education Intervention (BCEI) Study, a QOL survivorship intervention delivered using psychoeducational support and targeting women with early-stage breast cancer in the first year of post-treatment survivorship. The aims of this article are consistent with the

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