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# CHARACTERIZATION OF CHRONIC PAIN IN WOMEN SUBMITTED TO BREAST CANCER TREATMENT

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**Objective:** The aim of this study was to characterize chronic pain in women undergoing surgical treatment for breast cancer. **Methods:** This is a cross-sectional, retrospective, hospital-based study. All breast cancer patients undergoing clinical follow-up at a referral hospital in central Brazil were screened. Women with chronic pain after surgical treatment of breast cancer, defined by the presence of pain after 3 months of surgery, were included in the study. The questionnaires were applied by the responsible researcher in the form of an interview, which took place in a dedicated office. The McGill Pain Questionnaire (MPQ) and the visual analog scale (VAS) were used. **Results:** In all, 99 patients were interviewed, of which 46 were included in the study. Most patients were between 50 and 59 years old (39.1%), were married (45.7%), were housewives (58.7%), and had completed high school (45.7%). Arterial hypertension was the most prevalent clinical comorbidity (41.3%), followed by diabetes mellitus (13.0%). A total of 45 (97.8%) patients underwent sentinel lymph node biopsy, but 22 (47.8%) required axillary lymphadenectomy for some oncological reason; 35 (76.0%) patients underwent chemotherapy (neoadjuvant or adjuvant), and 40 underwent radiotherapy (87.0%). According to the VAS, the mean pain intensity was 5.5 ( $\pm 2.6$ ). Most patients reported worsening pain with movement, with 26 (52.2%) “sometimes”, and another 14 (30.4%) “always”. In the MPQ, there was a predominance of the sensory domain among the characteristics of chronic pain. Relaxation techniques (52.2%), stretching (50.0%) and deep breathing (47.8%) were the most mentioned therapeutic measures. Drug treatment was reported by 21 (45.7%) women and acupuncture by only one. **Conclusion:** In the analyzed population, chronic pain was observed with moderate intensity and with a predominance of sensitive characteristics according to the MPQ. The development of strategies for prevention, early diagnosis, and multidisciplinary treatment can help reduce chronic pain in breast cancer survivors.

**Keywords:** Breast cancer. Breast-conserving surgery. Mastectomy. Adjuvant radiotherapy. Chronic pain.