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DOCTOR IN REHABILITATION SCIENCES AND PHYSIOTHERAPY

LIFE AFTER BREAST CANCER: THE STRUGGLE WITH CHRONIC PAIN AND SLEEP.

LAURENCE LEYSEN

Friday, July 5th 2019 at 18:00

Room Auditorium P. Brouwer, campus Jette

Please confirm your presence before July 1st to laurence.leysen@vub.be
ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH

Worldwide, breast cancer remains the most common and lethal type of cancer among women in developed countries. In 2018, 2.1 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer and by 2030, the global burden is expected to nearly double. With the highest global incidence rates being observed, Belgium remains the black spot for breast cancer. Fortunately, advances in cancer treatment and screening strategies have led to a 10-year survival rate for 80% of all breast cancer patients in the developed countries.

Although surveillance for cancer recurrence remains the number 1 priority, one should be aware that a substantial group of the breast cancer survivors experiences troublesome unmet needs during the transition from cancer patient to cancer survivor, such as chronic pain and sleep problems. Coping with chronic pain and sleep problems is sometimes referred to as “the price of survival”, reflecting the mixed feelings of gratefulness for survival while acknowledging the dreadful impact of the symptoms experienced. Those unmet needs not only mediate a poorer health-related quality of life, greater symptom burden and physical impairments, but are also associated with low care satisfaction, poor treatment adherence and surveillance. The lower the survivor’s resilience, the worse the survivor’s outcomes are.

Despite its detrimental effects and clinical importance, chronic pain and sleep problems remain the most overlooked side-effects during survivorship. The acknowledgement of cancer survivorship as a distinct phase of the cancer trajectory is not sufficient, with greater investments in research and survivorship strategies needed to acquire additional knowledge about chronic pain and sleep problems in breast cancer survivors.

Therefore, the aim of the present doctoral thesis was to gain insights into chronic pain and sleep problems amongst breast cancer survivors with following thesis outline:

Chapter 1: Prevalence of pain in breast cancer survivors: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Chapter 2: Risk factors of pain in breast cancer survivors: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Chapter 3: Prevalence and risk factors of sleep problems in breast cancer survivors: systematic review and meta-analyses.

Chapter 4: Chronic pain in breast cancer survivors: nociceptive, neuropathic or central sensitization pain?

Chapter 5: The mediating effect of pain catastrophizing and perceived injustice in the relationship of pain on health-related quality of life in breast cancer survivors.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Laurence Leysen holds a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Sciences & Physical Therapy and an advanced master in Manual Therapy. After finishing her studies, she started her PhD at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2015. She combined her PhD-work with her work as a teaching assistant. Besides that, she is a member of the international Pain in Motion group for which she gave numerous courses and lectures to physical therapists and patients, in Belgium and abroad. Up to now, she authored and co-authored in twelve peer reviewed papers.