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## Characterization of chronic pain in women undergoing breast cancer treatment

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**Objective:** The objective of this study was to characterize chronic pain in women undergoing surgical treatment for breast cancer. **Methodology:** This is a transversal study of quantitative and qualitative basis. Data collection was performed at a tertiary breast cancer treatment center located in central Brazil. We used the McGill Pain Questionnaire structured pain assessment questionnaire in its Brazilian version (BR – MPQ) and the Visual Analog Scale (VAS). **Results:** A total of 99 patients were interviewed, of which 46 were included in the study. Notably, 30 (65.2%) patients underwent quadrantectomy for surgical treatment of breast cancer. A type of breast reconstruction technique was used in 26 (56.5%) patients, most of them immediately. Sentinel lymph node biopsy was performed in 45 (97.8%) patients, but 22 (47.8%) required axillary lymphadenectomy for some oncological reason. Notably, 35 (76.0%) patients underwent neoadjuvant or adjuvant chemotherapy, and 40 underwent radiotherapy (87.0%). We observed a predominance of intermittent and pulsating pain, with a mean intensity of 5.5 on the VAS. In the McGill questionnaire, a total score of 28.24 ( $\pm 14.51$ ) was observed. All participants had chronic pain of the intermittent type, starting after surgery, located in the surgery scar and in the ipsilateral arm. The sensory domain contributed the most to pain perception, with an average of 16.83 ( $\pm 7.52$ ). The pain assessment category was reported by 41 (89.1%) patients, followed by the sensitive (n=15; 32.6%), miscellaneous (n=14; 30.4%), and affective (n=12; 26.1%). Chronic pain was predominantly characterized as pulsating, throbbing, sensitive, punishing, and strong. According to the VAS, the average intensity reported was 5.52 ( $\pm 2.61$ ). **Conclusion:** Our study characterized chronic pain in women undergoing surgical treatment for breast cancer, which may help identify and manage this symptom.

**Keywords:** breast cancer; mastectomy; chronic pain.