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## IMPACT OF BREAST CANCER ON SEXUALITY: WHAT'S ABOUT THE TUNISIAN WOMEN?

L. Mnif<sup>1</sup>, J. Masmoudi<sup>1</sup>, N. Charfi<sup>1</sup>, I. Baati<sup>1</sup>, M. Guermazi<sup>2</sup>, A. Jaoua<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Psychiatry A, <sup>2</sup>Gynecology, Hedi Chaker University Hospital, Sfax, Tunisia

Introduction: The sexual functioning problems in women after breast cancer are common. Certain factors related to treatment and its clinical implications may contribute to these problems.

Objectives were to:

- Evaluate the changes in sexual life after treatment of breast cancer relative to the general population.
- Identify the influence of demographic and clinical factors on sexuality.

Methods: We recruited 50 patients who were in remission for at least 3 months after initial treatment of breast cancer, and 50 healthy women.

Sexuality and body image was evaluated using the Arabic version of the specific scale of breast cancer QLQ-BR23, which is an additional module to the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) QLQ-C30 questionnaire.

Results: Compared with control subjects, patients reported more dyspareunia (61.5% vs 38.5%) and vaginal dryness (61.3% vs 38.7%). A diminished sense of sexual attractiveness was significantly more frequent within patients ( $p= 0.001$ ).

The patients had poor sexual functioning and sexual satisfaction and the mean scores were respectively 45.3% and 43.9%. Additional analyses indicated that menopausal status and sexual difficulties in the partner was significantly related to poorer sexual satisfaction ( $p$  respectively 0.018 and 0.014).

The mean score of body image was 47.7% and its alteration had no significant impact on the themes of sexuality.

Conclusion: These findings confirm and extend previous reports of impaired sexual functioning among breast cancer survivors. Results suggest that relief of sexual difficulties in partner should be an essential component of efforts to improve sexuality of patients.