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Requirements: Data projector

Abstract:

While breast cancer is often associated with older women, in the year 2000, 25 per cent of new breast cancer diagnoses in Australia were in young women. This study explores the experiences of breast cancer from an interpretive perspective to fill the gap in our understanding. Living through a diagnosis of breast cancer is extremely traumatic, emotional responses are intense and the experience is profoundly personal. To explore this experience through a feminist perspective allows for rich and in depth data to be gathered. This paper reports the findings of an interpretive research project that explored the experiences of younger women with breast cancer highlighting the unique concerns for this age group. The six Queensland women who participated in the study told personal stories of their struggle with issues that relate specifically to being young with breast cancer. These issues were young family, sexuality, early clinically induced menopause and resultant infertility. They described the positives and negatives of this life changing experience as they tried to maintain their roles of mother and partner within the family. This research has provided a valuable insight into the experience of breast cancer for young women and their individual emotional concerns. The results can serve to sensitise and influence health professionals in relation to the care of younger women with a breast cancer diagnosis.