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Analysis of Role Changes for Women with Breast Cancer Related Lymphedema to Return to Work

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BACKGROUND

Lymphedema is one of the principal complaints seen from women after undergoing breast cancer surgery, impacting return to work and overall quality of life. Occupational therapists treat breast cancer survivors diagnosed with secondary lymphedema, however, there is a gap in literature regarding occupational therapy services for women who are diagnosed with breast cancer-related lymphedema (BCRL). (Korucu et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2020).

PROBLEM/PURPOSE

The problem is little is known about the role changes experienced by women with lymphedema as they transition from traditional medical care to returning to work as a survivor.

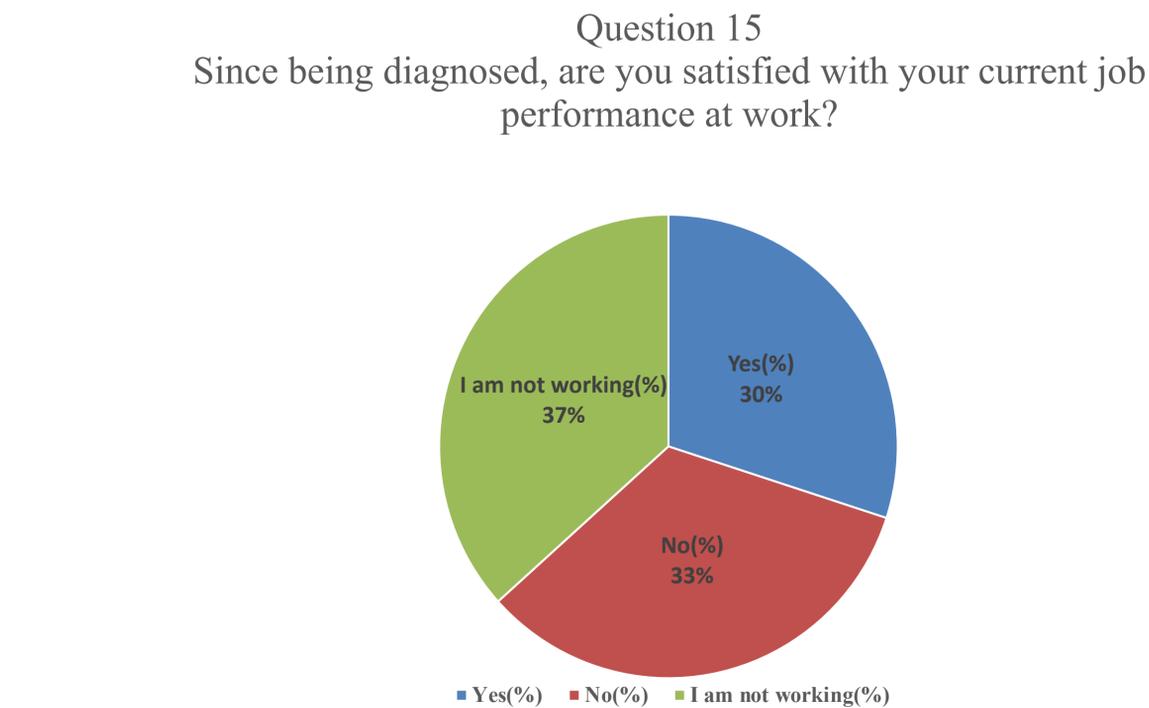
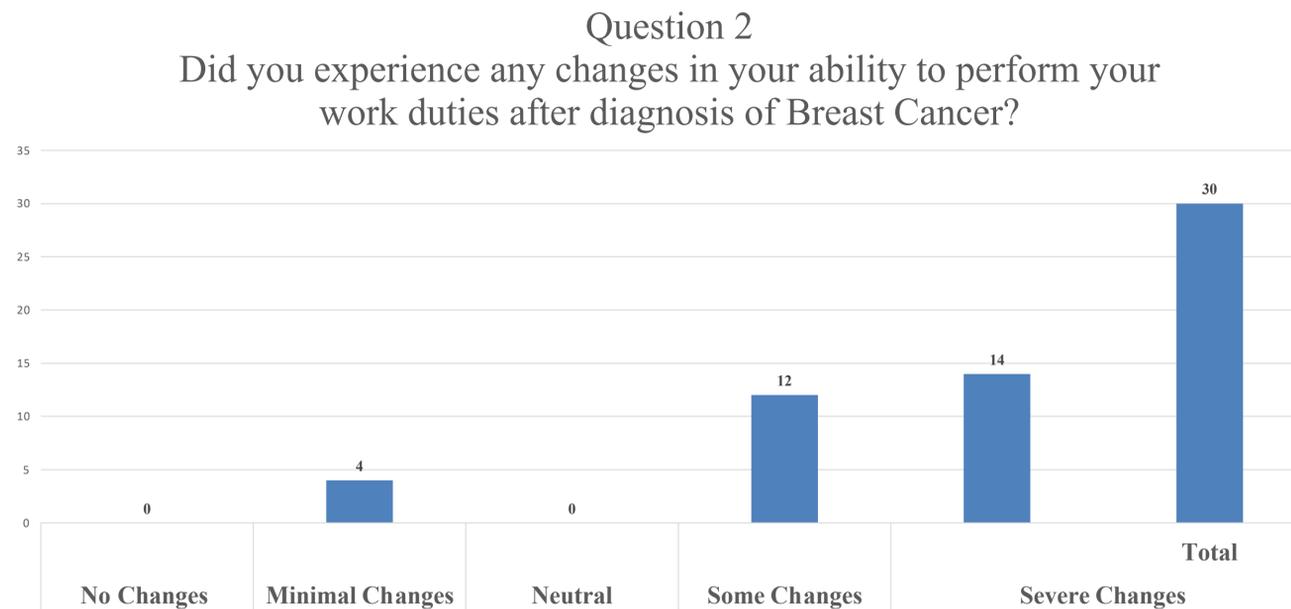
The purpose is to analyze the role changes experienced by women with lymphedema as they transition from traditional medical care to returning to work as a breast cancer survivor

METHODS

This study recruited participants from an online social media support group for breast cancer survivors. A qualitative survey was administered to breast cancer survivors diagnosed with secondary lymphedema.

- 40 invited
- 30 respondents to survey
- **Online survey:** Participants answered multiple choice, drop-down, and Likert scale questions on a 15-question survey to determine the impact breast cancer-related lymphedema has had on role changes they've experienced when returning to work.

RESULTS



References
Korucu, T. S., Ucurum, S. G., Tastaban, E., Ozgun, H., & Kaya, D. O. (2021). Comparison of shoulder-arm complex pain, function, and scapular dyskinesia in women with and without unilateral lymphedema after breast cancer surgery. *Clinical Breast Cancer, 21*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clbc.2020.10.008>
Sun, Y., Shigaki, C. L., & Armer, J. M. (2020). The influence of breast cancer related lymphedema on women's return-to-work. *Women's Health, 16*(1), 1745506520905720. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745506520905720>

OUTCOMES

Outcome objectives:

- Collect and analyze data gathered from surveys on role changes for women diagnosed with lymphedema who are breast cancer survivors and compare differences of themes in literature.
- Compare and contrast different types of professionals providing services for the BCRL population and compare to the services read in the literature.
- Complete a needs assessment addressing the needs and gaps in knowledge, practices, and skills at an outpatient clinic for BCRL survivors.

Topics covered:

- Type of surgical procedure performed for lymph nodes.
- Job demands;
- Age;
- Employment Status;
- Types of services they underwent;
- Treatment interventions;
- Satisfaction with work status.

Research Questions:

- Is there a relationship between degree of change in ability to perform work duties and the work responsibilities performed?
- Is there a relationship between degree of change in ability to perform work duties and satisfaction with current job performance?

Theoretical Frameworks:

- The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO):** Used as a foundation for the development of the quantitative study analyzing role changes in the work setting for breast cancer survivors diagnosed with secondary lymphedema and OT lack of OT interventions addressing return to work.

Concluding Thoughts: Continued efforts should be made in developing evidence-informed OT interventions addressing return to work for breast cancer survivors diagnosed with secondary lymphedema. Limited research addressing this population continues to limit successful return to work.