EXPECTATIONS OF POSTOPERATIVE PAIN AND RECOVERY: THE ROLE OF PREOPERATIVE PATIENT FACTORS

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INTRODUCTION / AIM

Preoperative expectations of pain and recovery predict postoperative pain intensity. However, little is known about factors associated with these expectations. The objective of this study was to identify the correlates of preoperative expectations of postoperative pain and recovery among breast cancer surgery patients (BCS).

METHODS

Cross-sectional analysis was conducted of data from 205 women (M=51.8 ± 11.2 years) scheduled to undergo lumpectomy or mastectomy. Preoperatively, participants completed measures of demographics; experience with cancer, surgery, and analgesics; pain intensity and interference; physical functioning; comorbidities; depression; trait and state anxiety; and pain anxiety and catastrophizing. Four expectation outcomes were assessed: preoperative expectations of pain immediately after surgery, after analgesic administration, and after one week; and expectations of time (days) to return to normal activities. Backward multivariate regressions identified correlates of each outcome.

RESULTS

Greater expected pain immediately after surgery was associated with younger age, mastectomy, and more intense preoperative pain and pain anxiety. Greater expected pain after analgesics was associated with younger age, mastectomy, past problems with analgesics, and greater pain catastrophizing and depression. Greater expected pain after one week was associated with younger age, mastectomy, previous surgery, and greater depression. A longer expected recovery time was associated with mastectomy, previous surgery, not being married/partnered, and greater state anxiety.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

This is the first study to identify correlates of preoperative expectations of postoperative pain and recovery in women having BCS. Expectations of postoperative pain are associated with a range of biopsychosocial factors that may benefit from preoperative intervention.

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