A Nursing Intervention for the Post-Mastectomy Patient: ABCs to Recovery
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**Problem:** One of the treatment options for breast cancer women is mastectomy, or surgical removal of one or both breasts along with removal of axillary lymph nodes. Jackson-Pratt (JP) drains are placed in the surgical site and remain there for three to seven days to prevent fluid build-up and facilitate healing. Immediately after mastectomy, patients experience a number of physiological and psychological problems that may include decreased physical activity, altered body image, and discomfort. This study evaluates an intervention that integrates preoperative education and the use of a specially-designed post-mastectomy gown (Papilla Gown) with mastectomy patients. The major aim will be to determine whether mastectomy patients who wear a gown designed for post-mastectomy patients and/or have the study education to prepare for postoperative care will have improved functional activity (A), body image (B), comfort (C) at 1 week and six months postoperatively. Additionally, changes in education and arm circumference will be assessed.

**Evidence:** The Papilla Gown was designed to support the drains, facilitate movement, and enhance body image. Early exercise and movement following surgery is important to activity, body posture, and comfort. Education is basic to developing an understanding of what to expect after breast surgery and how to better care for oneself, including comfort measures. Information giving is crucial to improve self-management (e.g., increased adherence to health care instructions and prescribed medication after discharge) and to reduce stress associated with illness, leading to improved functioning in every day life.

**Strategy:** The randomized controlled study will use an experimental factorial design. At least 156 participants scheduled for a mastectomy will be recruited and randomized to one of four groups: the study education only, special gown only, the study education and special gown, and usual education and patient gown. All participants will complete the study questionnaires before surgery and at 1 week and 6 months postoperatively.

**Evaluation:** Two-way MANCOVA will be used to determine the main effect of each variable and the interaction of the two independent variables (i.e., gown and education) on the dependent variables of activity, body image, and comfort, as well as for lymphedema, controlling for before surgery scores. One-way ANCOVA will test differences in breast cancer knowledge between those who do or do not receive education controlling for before surgery scores.

**Results:** The recovery of patient related to activity, body image, comfort, breast cancer knowledge and arm circumference as a sign of lymphedema will significantly be improved. The results will be used to further modify the intervention and to increase awareness of nurse practitioners and other health care professionals of the specific needs of post mastectomy patients.
**Recommendations:** The proposed study will lay the foundation for a model that can be employed by hospitals and physicians’ offices to increase patients’ knowledge of breast cancer care and help them assume and assert the concept of a “speedy recovery” that will help facilitate a return to their former lives.

**Bibliography:**


