

Experience of Fathers in Talking to the Children When Their Mothers Have Young Breast Cancer

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Background

- ◆ Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women

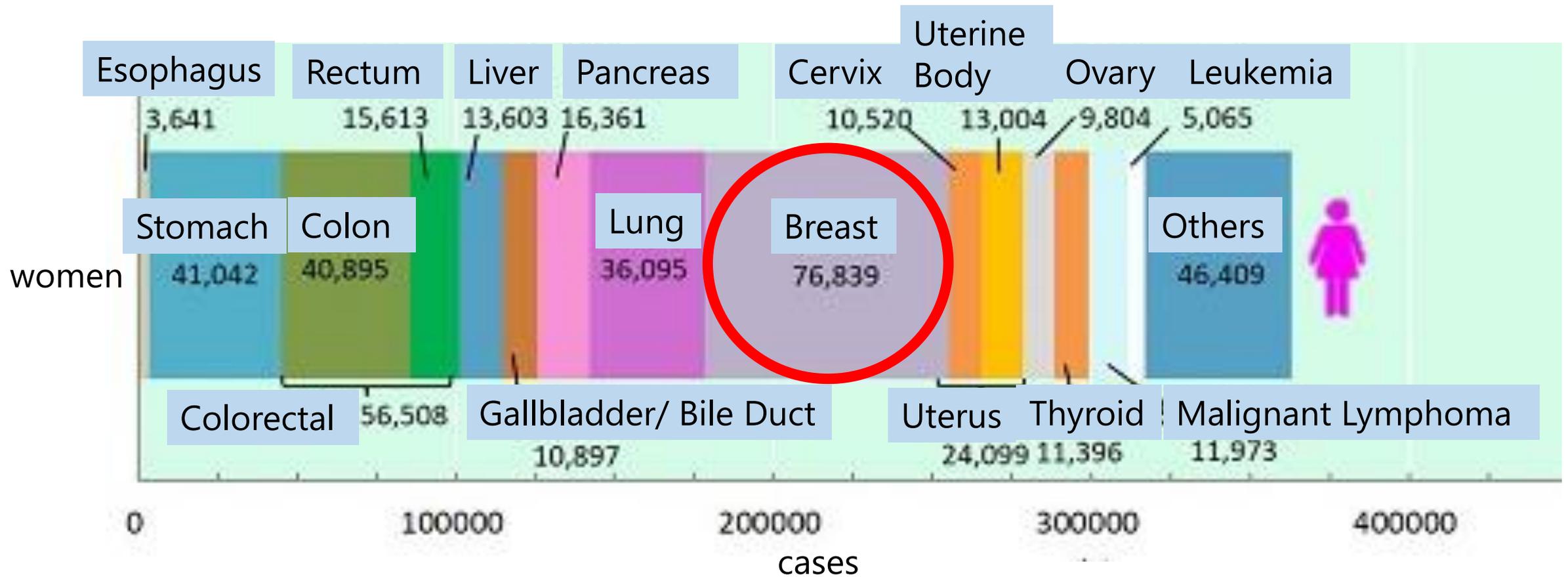


Figure 1. (National Cancer Center Japan, 2015)

Background

- ◆ 76,839 cases of breast cancer in Japan in 2013
- ◆ 3,948 (5%) of these cases were of breast cancer in women under 40

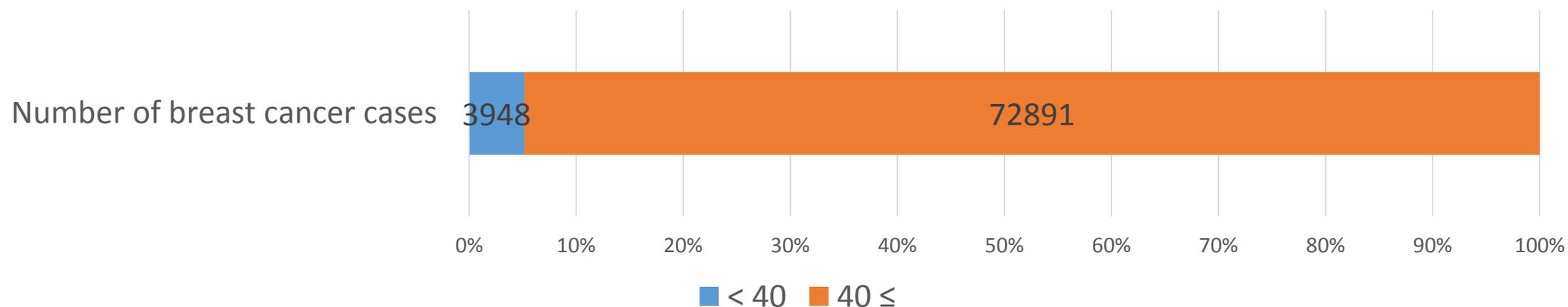


Figure 2. (National Cancer Center Japan, 2015)

Background

- ◆ Problems faced by patients with breast cancer under 40
 - Fertility
 - Employment
 - Sexuality
 - Peer support
 - **Childcare**

(Kitano et al, 2014; Omatsu et al, 2012)

Background

- ◆ Problems encountered while raising children
 - Talking to the children about their mother's breast cancer

While talking openly to their children about their cancer is considered important in childcare, it causes psychological distress to the mothers who are cancer patients

(Barnes et al, 2000)

Background

- ◆ Spouses are important supporters of patients with breast cancer
 - How are fathers (spouses) involved in talking to their children about their mother's breast cancer?

The detailed experience of the spouses of patients with young breast cancer, who constitute part of the child-rearing generation, have not been clarified

Objective

- ◆ To elucidate the involvement and experience of fathers in talking to the children when their mothers have young breast cancer

Methods

- ◆ Participants
 - The spouses of 6 women diagnosed with breast cancer under 40
- ◆ Data collection
 - Semi-structured interviews with open-ended answers
- ◆ Data analysis
 - Interview transcripts are used as data
 - Krippendorff's method of content analysis is used

Ethical considerations

- The institutional review board of Hamamatsu University School of Medicine approved this study (no.17-046)
- Participants were provided written explanations of the purpose and methods of the study, that data obtained from the study would not be used for any other purposes besides the research in question, that data would be handled in such a way that individuals would not be personally identifiable, etc
- We obtained written consents from participants and their wives

Table 1-1. Characteristics of the participants (N = 6)

| Characteristics | Spouses | Patients |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Age (M, range) | 40.0 (37–43) | 38.1 (36–40) |
| Occupation (n, %) | | |
| • Company employee, civil servant | 4 (66.7%) | 2 (33.3%) |
| • Self-employed | 2 (33.3%) | 0 |
| • Unemployed | 0 | 4 (66.7%) |
| Age of child at time of diagnosis (n) | | |
| • 0–6 years | 7 | |
| • 7–11 years | 2 | |

Table 1-2. Characteristics of the participants (N=6)

| Characteristics | Spouses | Patients |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| Years elapsed since diagnosis (M, range) | - | 6 (2–10) |
| Age at time of diagnosis (M, range) | - | 31.6 (28–35) |
| Surgical procedure | | |
| • Mastectomy | - | 4 |
| • Lumpectomy | - | 2 |
| Adjuvant therapy | | |
| • Chemotherapy | - | 5 |
| • Radiotherapy | - | 4 |
| • Endocrine therapy | - | 4 |

Results

- ◆ Experiences of fathers in talking to their children when their mothers have young breast cancer were:
 - i. Both the father and mother had concerns about how to talk to their children about breast cancer
 - ii. The father considered that it was best to tell the truth when the mother felt the timing was best
 - iii. The father did not know how their children were told about the breast cancer
 - iv. The father felt that there was no need to talk about breast cancer
 - v. The father tried his best to set aside time to spend with his children

Results

- i. Both the father and mother had concerns about how to talk to their children about breast cancer
 - We talked about it when our daughter was 10 as we felt she could understand it. I felt our daughter would believe that cancer meant death. We kept wondering, 'When should we tell her? We'll have to tell her one day.' We worried together for about a year and then told her.

Results

- ii. The father considered that it was best to tell the truth when the mother felt the timing was best
 - In consideration of my wife's feelings, I waited until she was ready to talk. That's why, at the time, I only explained to our daughter that her mother was being admitted to hospital because she wasn't feeling well.

Results

- iii. The father did not know how their children were told about the breast cancer
 - I don't know when or how my wife explained it to our children. I don't think my wife told our children because our children would not have understood the disease at that time. Now, our children say to me, "Mom was sick before, right?" So I think she told them something. The children see their mother looking healthy and must think that she has recovered from the disease now.

Results

- iv. The father felt that there was no need to talk about breast cancer
 - Our children will probably learn it naturally, so I don't think there's any need to tell them. I hadn't thought about it.

Results

- v. The father tried his best to set aside time to spend with his children
 - I thought that the children must not be burdened by their mother's hospitalization, so I went on outings with them.
 - I switched to a job with less time constraints and made an effort to talk with my wife and be with our children.
 - I got the feeling that our child had felt something and was enduring this. I had their friend come over to play.

Discussion

- Fathers wonder whether their children have a similar awareness of their mother's breast cancer as themselves
- Fathers adopt a passive approach to talking to their children about their mother's breast cancer and only give simple explanations
- Fathers increased the amount of time spent with their children as a result of the mother's breast cancer

Discussion

“Breast cancer in young families: a qualitative interview study of fathers and their role and communication with their children following the diagnosis of maternal breast cancer”

- Children were 6 years or older
 - Fathers gave information and reassurance
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- ◆ For information, fathers talk about mother’s illness and treatment and answer their children's questions, but for reassurance, they sometimes censor information
 - ◆ For reassurance, fathers play with their young children to distract them

(Forrest et al, 2009)

Discussion

In this study,

- many children were 6 years or younger at the time of the diagnosis
 - fathers believed their children had the same awareness of breast cancer as themselves
 - fathers took a passive approach to talking to their children and only gave simple explanations
 - fathers increased the time spent with their children
- ◆ Fathers' role as providers of reassurance took priority over their role as providers of information

Suggestions

- ◆ The results of the study suggest that medical professionals need to:
 - Understand fathers' perceptions of their wife's young breast cancer
 - Explain the need to talk to the children about the cancer depending on their age
 - Consider both the meaning behind children's reactions and how to address them

References

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