The role of multidisciplinary team in breast cancer patients

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ABSTRACT
Breast cancer has become a significant health problem worldwide being one of the most commonly diagnosed malignancies especially due to the wild implementation of screening tests and genetic counselling. Therefore attention was focused on improving the therapeutic strategies in such cases and to offer for each patient the chance of a personalized treatment. In this respect specialized teams have been organised in which each case is discussed and the final decision is transmitted to the patient. That is how the concept of multidisciplinary team developed. The aim of the current paper is to discuss about the concept and benefits of the multidisciplinary meetings in breast cancer patients. Keywords: breast cancer, multidisciplinary team, personalized treatment

BACKGROUND
Breast cancer has been widely studied in the last decades and it's approach suffered significant changes; therefore, while in 1907 William Halsted considered as a locally aggressive disease which can be successfully cured by using a radical surgical approach, six decades later Bernard and Edwin Fisher considered that breast cancer should be rather considered as a systemic disease and should be submitted to standard neoadjuvant chemotherapy in order to destroy the circulating cells which are supposed to be present from the early beginning (1,2). Therefore, breast cancer has no longer been considered as a locally aggressive disease which is curable only after radical surgery and rather became to be considered as a systemic disease necessitating an integrated, multidisciplinary approach (3).
BREAST CANCER AND SCREENING TESTS

The wide introduction of the screening tests led to a higher rate of breast cancer diagnosis; therefore, this malignancy became a serious health problem worldwide and attention was focused on establishing more efficient and even personalized therapeutic strategies in such cases. Meanwhile due to the higher number of young patients diagnosed with this malignancy in their management fertility and genetic counselling have been considered to be significant parts of their management. In this respect, the concept of multidisciplinary teams developed. Meanwhile, due to the significant differences which are present between different patients, the concept of personalised medicine developed, based on the affirmation that each case is an unique patient and needs an unique, personalised treatment (3,4).

THE ROLE OF THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY MEETINGS IN BREAST CANCER PATIENTS

In this respect, the most important consequences resulting from these changes of the therapeutic strategies, the overall incidence of breast cancer and particularly, early breast cancer increased – due to the wide implementation of the screening tests while the cancer specific mortality decreased – due to the early diagnostic of the disease and due to the implementation of the concept of personalised medicine (4-6). However, in Romania this situation is not so well balanced due to the fact that a significant number of cases are diagnosed in advanced stages of the disease and the concept of personalised medicine has been recently implemented. Therefore, although the reported incidence is not so high, the overall morbidity and mortality rates remain significant. However, in the last years, the creation and implementation of the concept of tumor board or multidisciplinary meetings for breast cancer patients conducted to a more standardised treatment and to the overall improvement off the cancer related prognosis (6-8).

Meanwhile another British study demonstrated the fact in order to have a personalised breast cancer center at least 90% of all newly diagnosed cases should be discussed in a multidisciplinary manner, to these discussions the presence of radiologist, pathologist, medical oncologist, surgeon and radiation oncologist being mandatory (9).

According to Taylor et al., in the United Kingdom a multidisciplinary team meeting should be composed from different health disciplines representing chiefs who meet at a certain time interval in order to discuss each case with newly diagnosed breast cancer and to establish the most appropriate diagnostic and treatment strategy (8).

Conclusions

Creating multidisciplinary teams and specialised centers for breast cancer diagnostic and treatment seem to be associated with significant benefits in terms of early diagnostic, rapid and adequate therapy and proper postoperative treatment and surveillance in breast cancer patients. Therefore, cases who can be discussed and treated in such multidisciplinary teams seem to have significant improvement of the long term outcomes, improved cancer specific survival being reported so far.
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