

**Abstract**

**Original Article**

**Caregiving Burden and Psychological Distress of Breast Cancer Patients' Husbands after Mastectomy**

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**Background:** Mastectomized women suffer significant psychological burden. Besides women, the burden of her husband is an important parameter for the couple's well-being.

**Aims:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the caregiver's burden of mastectomized women.

**Methodology:** Thirty three couples participated in this quantitative longitudinal study. The selection was made among women who during the previous two days had undergone mastectomy and were still hospitalized. Three months later, couples were re-evaluated. The HADS (for anxiety and depression in hospitalized patients) and the Zarit (for caregiver's burden) questionnaires were used.

**Results:** Right after the mastectomy, 45.5% of women presented with mild anxiety, 27.3% with moderate and 27.3% severe. As for depression, 12.1% of women appeared with normal levels, 24.2% mild and 21.2% moderate and 42.4% severe depression. Couple's anxiety and depression tend to resolve over time, although husbands experience greater burden three months after spouse's mastectomy.

**Conclusion:** The findings of the present study support the view that women and their husbands suffer significant psychological stress after mastectomy, while husbands continue to experience significant strain three months after spouse's mastectomy which was related to their role as caregivers.

**Key words:** Mastectomy, women, husbands, caregiver, burden