

*Abstract:*

The purpose of this long-term, follow-up study of breast cancer patients is to define universal psychological stages specific to the cancer. A validated and modified breast cancer Quality of Life model from the National Medical Center and Beckman Research Institute is the study tool. A pilot of eight breast cancer patients from a reconstructive plastic surgeon's office were recruited and prospectively completed one pre-operative survey; seven of eight subjects also completed a post-operative survey using the same QOL scale. Subjects were consented and analysis was blinded. Pearson's correlation test was used for comparison of questions in each survey. Significant correlations were found between different questions and responses on each survey, suggesting stages in recovery after 1 month of treatment. These included increased awareness of breast asymmetries, decrease in overall happiness and increase in difficulty to cope with cancer after the first survey. The study and follow-up surveys will continue through the ongoing recruitment of fifty patients and their recovery up to a year post-operatively. The final results will provide an educational tool for both patients and healthcare professionals by defining common stages of recovery for breast cancer patients and providing a means for surgeons and post-operative counselors to better tailor their care. This model will be similar to the stages of grief. We hypothesize that breast cancer recovery is predictable and can be defined in four stages—survival, restitution, symmetry and enhancement.