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Immediate Breast Reconstruction and Paradoxical Results Regarding the Ensuing Psychosocial Aspects as Indicated by Related Research

Vera Alves¹, Julia Shinzato², Fabricio Brenelli², Claudinei Campos³, Egberto Turato¹

¹DPPM - FCM - UNICAMP, Campinas - SP, Brazil, ²CAISM - FCM - UNICAMP, Campinas - SP, Brazil, ³FENF - FCM - UNICAMP, Campinas - SP, Brazil

BACKGROUND: The psychosocial aspects of corporeity and femininity have been appraised in the scientific literature on breast cancer treatment, mainly with regard to Immediate Breast Reconstruction (IBR). In this context of intention to suppress the pain of mutilation, it is crucial to understand the relevance of aspects seen to ensue from this procedure with a view to ensuring that IBR is not transformed into a panacea for the psychosocial consequences of mastectomy. **METHOD:** An integrated review of the literature published in articles featuring research on the psychosocial aspects arising from IBR was carried out. This material was confined to the period 2008 to 2013, in the following databases: PUBMED/MEDLINE, PSYCINFO e BVS/VHL (Virtual Health Library). The following terms were cross-referenced: Mammoplasty; Psychology; Breast Neoplasm; Immediate Breast Reconstruction. The results are discussed both in the sense of the conclusions and of the methodology used in the studies so as to identify their real meaning for the understanding of the psychosocial aspects considered to arise from IBR carried out after the mastectomy. **RESULTS:** The eleven articles analyzed refer to ten quantitative studies and one qualitative. The quantitative research analyses scores of psychosocial aspects, such as quality of life, satisfaction, body image and age. These data are compared between those gathered from women who had undergone IBR; late reconstruction; those who had not had reconstruction; and those who underwent conservative surgery. The results, when understood globally, showed no significant differences between the women in the different procedures. When analyzed in the specificity of each category covered by the tools used, they show that women who underwent IBR show better results. **CONCLUSIONS:** This “paradox” is discussed in the face of methodological implications and their consequent limitation. The relation between methods and results shows the importance of understanding the conclusions of quantitative studies, advocating the necessary attention to the aspects that this methodology involves, such as the rigor of the method; the research into aspects considered to be pre-existing, as well as the possibly limited emotional availability of the patients at the time of the evaluations. It also

emphasizes that the scientific significance of certain statistical results are clarified by the analyzed qualitative study. **RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS:** This research contributes to the reflection on the studies developed in the psychosocial sphere of IBR. The most prominent aspect is the methodological one. We saw evidence of methodological limitations, not always perceptible. Methodological questions discussed here had already been appraised by the reviews of the Cochrane library. Nevertheless, this study puts them in line with other scientific discussions on the tools commonly used in these studies. **CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS:** This study advocates the care needed to prevent IBR becoming a panacea for the emotional afflictions arising from mastectomy. We believe healthcare professionals should be more attentive in understanding the meanings each patient attributes to the procedure instead of trusting the beneficial indicators of IBR. These arise from studies whose results are paradoxical and derive from a quantitative evaluation, not from a clinical attention, which, if desirable for research purposes, proves indispensable in clinical practice. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FUNDING:** This research is supported by FAPESP – São Paulo Research Foundation under number 2012/16456-0 and 2012/17815-4.