Evaluation of anaesthesia-related fears in patients scheduled for elective breast cancer surgery, through a self-administered questionnaire

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Background

Previous studies have documented that levels of preoperative anxiety are associated with outcomes relevant to the anaesthesiologist, such as postoperative pain control and patient satisfaction¹.

Risk factors have been identified: female sex, history of cancer and psychiatric disorders, while previous surgeries were associated with less anxiety².

We studied the population of female patients undergoing anaesthesia consultation for elective breast cancer surgery in a specialized center to verify if these risk factors predict self-reported concerns related to anaesthesia.

Materials and Methods

A self-administered questionnaire was directed to 109 adult female patients before preoperative anaesthesia consultation for elective breast cancer surgery.

As defined by the local ethics committee, data was collected anonymously and included:

- Age
- Previous general anaesthesia experience
- Formal education level
- Known diagnosis of depression, anxiety or neurologic disorder (KDDAND)

Participants were required to rate several fears associated with anaesthesia according to a 5 categories ordinal qualitative scale. Test for Trend in Binomial Proportions was used for associations between each variable of age, KDDAND and previous general anaesthesia experience with rating of anaesthesia-related fears.

Results and Discussion

- Average age was 58,7 years [26-91].
- 109 questionnaires: 24 excluded due to incomplete data, and 85 (78%) included in the analysis.
- 38,8% reported having a KDDAND.
- 80% had been previously submitted to general anaesthesia.
- The most frequent reason for a bad previous experience was nausea/vomiting.
- Previous anaesthetic experience was associated with less fear of “not waking up/dying” ($p=0.0103$, figure 1)
- Negative previous anaesthetic experience was related with increased rating of fear of “nausea/vomiting after surgery” ($p=0.0318$, figure 2).
- Age and self-reported KDDAND were not found to be associated with anaesthesia-related fears, although this might reflect a small sample size and limited sensitivity.

Figure 1 – Trend Test:

Previous experience with general anaesthesia (Yes vs No) and fear of “not waking up/dying” (1-5)
 $p = 0.0103$

Figure 2 – Trend Test

Negative experience with general anaesthesia (Yes vs No) and fear of “nausea/vomiting after surgery” (1-5)
 $p = 0.0318$

Conclusions

- ❖ Previous experience and the increased risk of nausea/vomiting seem to influence anaesthesia-related fears in adult female patients undergoing breast cancer surgery.
- ❖ In this population, other factors might be more predictive, although this must be studied in a larger sample.

REFERENCES

- 1 - *Patient Education and Counseling*. 2003; 51; 169–176
- 2 - *Acta Anaesthesiologica Scandinavica*. 2001; 45: 298–307

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