



## **COPING MECHANISM OF BREAST CANCER PATIENTS UNDERGOING CHEMOTHERAPY DURING THE COVID- 19 PANDEMIC**

Mutia Nadra Maulida<sup>1</sup>, Putri Widita Muharyani<sup>2</sup>, Eka Yulia Fitri<sup>3</sup>, Karolin Adhisty<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Bagian Keperawatan Fakultas Kedokteran Universitas Sriwijaya

Email: [mutianadra@fk.unsri.ac.id](mailto:mutianadra@fk.unsri.ac.id)

---

### **ABSTRACT**

Cancer is one of the most common non-communicable and chronic diseases in the world, one of them is breast cancer. Breast cancer is a disorder in the growth of normal breast cells which is characterized by abnormal cells arising from normal cells that can infiltrate lymph tissue and blood vessels. This will have a major impact on patients undergoing chemotherapy and their families, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only physically but also psychologically, economically and in other aspects of life, which certainly affect the coping mechanisms of patients and families. One of the support efforts that can be provided by nurses as educators is the intensification of health education activities through community service activities in the form of counseling and coaching to improve the coping mechanisms of breast cancer patients.

Keywords: Breast Cancer, Coping Mechanism, Chemotherapy, Covid-19 Pandemic

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Breast cancer is cancer that occurs in the mammary gland due to cell malignancy or uncontrolled cell growth from gland cells and their ducts, normally cells will grow according to the body's needs, but unlike breast cancer, damaged cells do not die immediately, but build up new cells whose number exceeds the body's needs. In addition, mortality from breast cancer is still high, especially in developing countries, due to delays in diagnosis, which also means delays in treatment<sup>1</sup>.

According to the World Cancer Research Fund (2018) breast cancer is the most common cancer in women worldwide, accounting for 25.4% of the total number of new cases diagnosed in 2018. In addition, the American Cancer Society (2015) states that there were 231.840 new cases of breast cancer (29%) and 40.290 deaths (15%)<sup>2</sup>. The Indonesian Health Profile in 2017 stated that breast cancer and cervical cancer are the types of cancer with the highest prevalence in women in Indonesia, where up to 2017 there



have been found 12.023 breast tumors and 3.079 suspect breast cancer and as many as 1.980 women in South Sumatra diagnosed with cervical and breast cancer<sup>3</sup>.

Various treatment methods for breast cancer patients have been developed in various countries including Indonesia. One method of cancer treatment is chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is a form of cancer treatment by giving anti-cancer drugs in the form of liquid pills or capsules or can be through an infusion that aims to kill cancer cells<sup>4</sup>.

However, chemotherapy treatment is not only about breast cancer cells but also cells throughout the body. Chemotherapy treatment has physical and psychological side effects. Physical side effects that often occur are anemia, diarrhea, fatigue, hair loss and even baldness, nausea and vomiting, weight loss, anorexia or dry mouth, and constipation. These side effects have an impact on the patient's psychology so that cancer patients feel uncomfortable, anxious, and even patients feel afraid to undergo chemotherapy treatment coupled with the current COVID-19 pandemic<sup>5</sup>.

This is what makes breast cancer sufferers feel the burden increased and affects their coping mechanisms. Coping mechanisms are ways that individuals use in solving problems, overcoming changes that occur, and threatening situations, both cognitively and behaviorally. Coping is a process in which a person tries to manage the perceived difference between wants (demands) and income (resources) that are valued in a stressful situation. Coping can be directed to correct or overcome a problem and also help changing perceptions of nonconformities, accepting danger, escaping or avoiding stressful situations. There are several factors that affect the coping mechanism of cancer patients, namely age, gender, education level, health level, personality and self-esteem<sup>6</sup>.

Providing assistance is one of the strategies used to improve the coping mechanisms of breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The role of educators or health workers is to provide health information such as side effects of chemotherapy and ways to overcome these side effects. Education can also increase a person's knowledge of healthy behavior or a healthy lifestyle. With the knowledge possessed by the family, the awareness in them will be able to change attitudes and behavior in accordance with the knowledge they have. In addition, health education can also motivate a person to make changes<sup>7</sup>.

## **METHODS**

This community service activity is carried out in the form of an online discussion through the whatsapp group application on Tuesday, October 12, 2021 in commemoration of the 59th DIES Natalis of the Faculty of Medicine, Sriwijaya University. This activity was also held in collaboration with the Research and Community Service Unit of the Faculty of Medicine, Sriwijaya University and P2WPKP (Persatuan Pendukung Wanita Penyandang Kanker Payudara) Wilayah Sumatera Selatan. The participants of this online discussion were 194 breast cancer patients.



## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Understanding Coping Mechanisms**

Coping is a constant change in cognitive and behavior in an attempt to cope with specific internal and/or external demands that exhaust or exceed the individual's resources. Effective coping is coping that helps a person to tolerate and accept stressful situations and not worry about the pressure that he/she cannot control.

Coping mechanisms are ways that individuals use in solving problems, overcoming changes that occur, and threatening situations, both cognitively and behaviorally. Coping is a process in which a person tries to manage the perceived difference between wants (demands) and income (resources) that are valued in a stressful situation. Coping can be directed to correct or overcome a problem and also help changing perceptions of nonconformities, accepting danger, escaping or avoiding stressful situations<sup>8</sup>.

Among several opinions about coping, it can be concluded that coping is a way or step taken by individuals to overcome the problems, adapt to changes, and respond to situations that threaten or exceed the limits of individual abilities, both cognitively and behaviorally.

### **2. Classification of coping in breast cancer patients**

The coping mechanism based on classification is divided into two. Adaptive coping mechanisms are mechanisms that support the function of integration (perfection or whole), growth, learning, and achieving goals. The categories are talking to others, solving problems effectively, relaxation techniques, balanced exercises, having broad perception, being able to receive support from others and constructive activities. Then the maladaptive coping mechanism is a coping mechanism that inhibits the integration function (perfection or the whole breaks growth), reduces autonomy, and tends to dominate the environment. The category is kind of behavior that tends to damage, performs unhealthy activities such as drugs, herbs and alcohol, unable to think about what to do or disorientated and unable to solve problems<sup>9</sup>.

### **3. Coping style of breast cancer patients**

Coping style is the determination of a person's style or certain characteristics of a person in solving a problem based on the demands faced. Coping styles are divided into two, namely positive coping styles and negative coping styles. Positive coping style is a coping style that is able to support ego integrity. Positive coping style affects adaptive coping mechanisms while negative coping style is a coping style that will reduce ego integrity, where the coping style will damage and harm oneself, negative coping style affects maladaptive coping mechanisms<sup>9</sup>.

Some groups in positive coping styles include:

1) Solving problem (problems faced and solved)



- 2) Utilizing social support (support from others to solve problems)
- 3) Looking for silver lining (think positive and take lessons from problems).

Some groups in negative coping styles include:

- 1) Avoidance (free yourself or run from problems)
- 2) Self-blame (blame yourself)
- 3) Wishfull thinking (setting too high self-standards)

#### 4. Coping strategies for breast cancer patients

The mechanism based on the strategy is divided into two, namely:

##### 1) Problem focused coping

Problem focused coping is aimed at reducing the desire for stressful situations or expanding resources to overcome them. Someone uses problem focused coping if they believe that the source or desire of the situation can be changed. The strategies used in problem focused coping include the following.

- a) Confrontative Coping: an attempt to change a situation that is considered pressing in an aggressive way, a high level of anger, and risk taking.
- b) Seeking Social Support: efforts to get emotional comfort and information help from others
- c) Planful problem solving: an effort to change the situation that is considered pressing in a careful, gradual, and analytical way.

##### 2) Emotion focused coping

Emotion focused coping is an effort to deal with stress by regulating emotional responses in order to adapt to the impact that will be caused by a condition or situation that is considered stressful. Emotion focused coping is aimed at controlling emotional responses to stressful situations. A person can regulate his emotional response through behavioral and cognitive approaches. Strategies used in emotional focus coping include the following.

- a) Self control: efforts to regulate feelings when faced with stressful situations.
- b) Distancing: trying not to get involved in the problem, such as avoiding the problem as if nothing had happened or creating positive views, such as treating the problem as a joke.
- c) Positive reappraisal: an attempt to find a positive meaning from the problem by focusing on self-development, usually involving religious matters.
- d) Accepting responsibility: an effort to realize one's own responsibility in the problems it faces and try to accept it to make things better.
- e) Escape / avoigen: attempts to overcome a stressful situation by running away from the situation by switching to other things such as eating, drinking, smoking, or using drugs.

#### 5. Factors that affect the coping mechanisms of breast cancer patients

The same stressor can cause different responses in each individual according to characteristics such as:



- 1) Age  
Age is related to a person's tolerance for stress and the type of stressor that is most disturbing. Adults are usually better able to control stress than children and the elderly.
- 2) Gender  
Women usually have a better resistance to stressors than men, especially women of reproductive age because hormones are still working normally.
- 3) Education Level  
The higher a person's level of education, tolerance and control of stressors are usually better.
- 4) Health Level  
Sick people suffer from stress more easily than healthy people.
- 5) Personality  
A person with a type A (closed) personality is more susceptible to stress than a person with a type B (open) personality.
- 6) Self esteem  
Low self-esteem tends to create a greater effect of stress than people who have high self-esteem.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the results of the evaluation of the implementation of this activity in breast cancer patients, 85% of breast cancer patients were able to apply what the service team had taught regarding handling the impact of the treatment process they felt while at home. Breast cancer sufferers have begun to understand and accept that even though they suffer from a chronic disease, they can still give benefits both themselves and the environment around them. It can be concluded that by being given this activity, it can improve the coping mechanisms of breast cancer sufferers.



## REFERENCES

1. Newton., Hickey., & Marrs. (2009). *Mosby's oncology nursing advisor: A comprehensive guide to clinical practice. Missouri: Mosby Elsevier.*
2. *World Cancer Research Fund.* (2018). *Worldwide cancer data.* [http://www.wcrf.org/dietandcancer/cancer-trends/worldwide-cancer-data.](http://www.wcrf.org/dietandcancer/cancer-trends/worldwide-cancer-data) Diperoleh 20 Oktober 2019
3. Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kesehatan Kementerian Kesehatan RI. (2018). *Riset Kesehatan Dasar (RISKESDAS 2018).* Jakarta: Kemenkes RI.
4. Prouse, J. (2010). The impact of methods of information on chemotherapy-related side effects. *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 14, 206 – 211.
5. Selwood, K. (2008). Side effects of chemotherapy. Dalam F. Gibson & L. Soanes (Eds), *Cancer in children and young people* (hal. 35 – 71). *West Sussex: John Wiley & Sonsl.*
6. Saragih., & Roswita. (2010). Peranan dukungan keluarga dan koping pasien dengan penyakit kanker terhadap pengobatan kemoterapi di RB 1 RSUP H. Adam Malik Medan Tahun 2010. *Jurnal Ners Indonesia*
7. Keller, J. (2006). Implementation of a prechemotherapy educational intervention for women newly diagnosed with breast cancer. *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 10, 57 – 60.
8. Owen, R. (2013). *Living with the enemy: Coping with the stress of chronic illness using CBT, mindfulness and acceptance.* Roulledge. New York.
9. Falconier, M. K., Randall, A.K., Bodenmann, G. (2016). *Couples Coping with stress : A Cross Cultural Perspective.* Roulledge. New York.