Fasting During Ramadan in Breast Cancer: Practices and Outcomes

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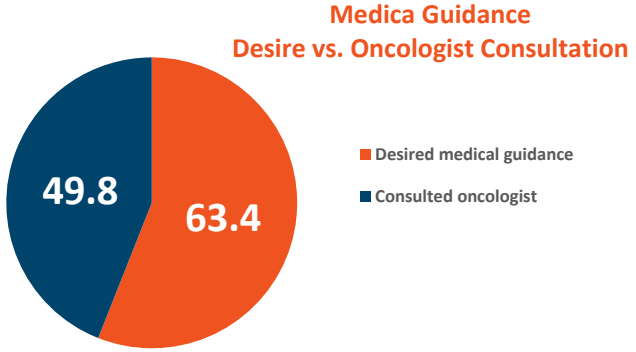
Introduction

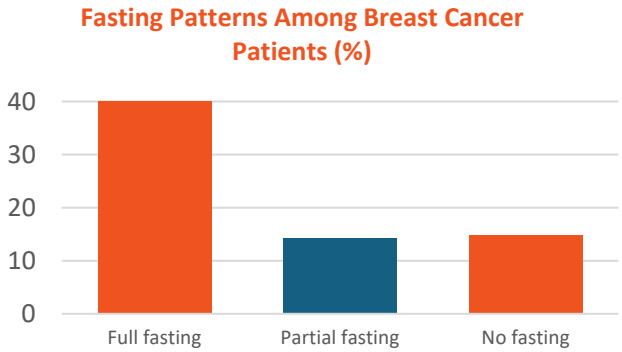
Fasting has emerged as a potential modifier of cancer outcomes through effects on metabolism. Ramadan represents a month of religiously prescribed fasting, yet clinical recommendations are scarce for this population.

To clarify how patients approach Ramadan fasting and the factors influencing safety, and given the lack of contemporary data, this study is one of the most extensive surveys to date examining these practices in a Middle Eastern breast cancer cohort.

Methodology

Cross-sectional survey conducted at Al-Bairouni University Hospital - Syria's National Cancer Center. All patients from the breast cancer unit diagnosed with breast cancer were included.





Results

- Patients' fasting patterns varied: 71.0% fasted for the entire month, 14.3% fasted only on some days, and 14.7% did not fast at all. Religious commitment was the primary motivator for fasting (85.8%).
- Fatigue was the most common mild symptom (32.5%), while 55.0% reported no health problems.
- 96.4% noted their treatment adherence was not negatively affected (some even reported improved adherence).
- In adjusted models, older age was associated with lower odds of full fasting (aOR 0.94 per year, 95% CI 0.91−0.97, p<.001). Metastatic disease (aOR 0.28; 95% CI 0.08−0.97, p=.046) and recurrent disease (aOR 0.17; 95% CI 0.04−0.91, p=.039).

Conclusion

Findings suggest that most breast cancer patients can fast safely with appropriate guidance, but there is a clear need for evidence-based guidelines. Oncology teams should proactively address fasting in care plans through culturally tailored counseling.

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References

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This study investigates the metabolic changes associated with Ramadan fasting and demonstrates short-term favorable shifts in metabolic profiles related to breast cancer risk, providing mechanistic insight into how fasting may influence cancer outcomes in Middle Eastern populations.

Bregazzi, N. L., Briki, W., Khabbache, H., et al. (2016). Ramadan fasting and patients with cancer: State of the art and future prospects. *Frontiers in Oncology, 6*, 37. https://doi.org/10.3389/fonc.2016.00037