Women's Insights on Sexual Health After Breast Cancer (WISH-BREAST) Online Survey: Metastatic Breast Cancer Cohort

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Background

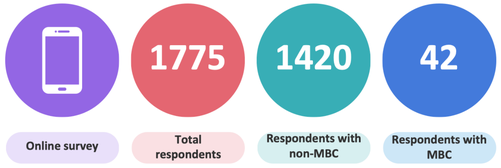
Sexual health symptoms are common and distressing in breast cancer survivors. There is limited data regarding the experience with sexual health among patients with metastatic breast cancer (MBC). Given the chronic nature of MBC and ongoing treatments, sexual health concerns may be especially complex and underrecognized in this population. We previously reported data from the WISH-BREAST study evaluating sexual health in breast cancer survivors[1]. Here, we present findings from the WISH-BREAST MBC cohort.

Methods

An anonymous online survey on sexual health in breast cancer survivors was distributed through a social media platform (Instagram) and e-mail. Questions included demographics, breast cancer history and treatment, sexual health symptoms and experience with medical care for sexual health symptoms.

Results

There were a total of 1775 responses to the survey. 42 reported having MBC and 1420 reported Stage 0-III; these respondents were included in this analysis. Median age at diagnosis was 39 years (range 33-45 years) – younger than the non-MBC respondents. MBC respondents were more likely to report early menopause (57.1% vs 28.2%).



Sexual health concerns were reported at high rates in respondents with **metastatic breast cancer**

Results

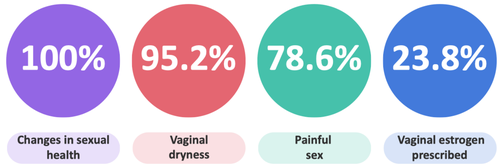
100% of respondents with MBC reported changes to sexual health. 95.2% reported a moderate to great deal of distress related to sexual health changes. The sexual health concerns reported are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Sexual Health Concerns among Respondents with MBC

Sexual health concern	Percentage
Decreased interest in sex	95.2%
Vaginal dryness	95.2%
Decreased lubrication	81%
Painful sex	78.6%
Decreased arousal	76.2%
Fatigue	57.1%
Body image concerns	54.8%
Sex is not pleasurable	52.4%
Difficulty with orgasm	38.1%
Unable to have penetrative sex	19%
Loss of orgasm	19%
Frequent urinary tract infections	19%

Results

Respondents with MBC were more likely to report painful sex (78.6% vs 58.8%), no sexual pleasure (52.4% vs 33.4%), and that sexual health concerns impacted relationships (85.7% vs 71.4%) than non-MBC respondents. While 95.2% of respondents with MBC reported vaginal dryness, 64.3% reported that treatment with vaginal hormones was not discussed. A similar proportion of respondents with MBC reported being prescribed vaginal estrogen compared to respondents with non-MBC (23.8% vs 22.7%). The majority of respondents with MBC obtained information about sexual health from social media.



Despite high rates of **vaginal dryness** and **painful sex**, few received **vaginal estrogen** prescriptions

Discussions about **sexual health** should be integrated into **metastatic breast cancer care** and access to **sexual health programs** and inclusion in **research** improved

Conclusions

In this online survey, respondents with MBC reported high rates of sexual health concerns and distress. Despite the prevalence of symptoms such as vaginal dryness, painful sex and loss of sexual pleasure, conversations around management options, including vaginal hormones, remain limited. These findings underscore critical gaps in clinical care and patient-provider communication regarding sexual health in the metastatic setting and highlight the potential role of social media as an information source. Integrating sexual health discussions into routine MBC care, improving access to evidence-based treatments and sexual health programs, and including patients with MBC in clinical trials focused on sexual health are essential steps toward enhancing quality of life for this population.

References: 1. Agrawal LS, Teplinsky E, Feygin YB, Kluthe T, Marcovici S, Menn C. Women's Insights on Sexual Health After Breast Cancer (WISH-BREAST) Survey. JCO Oncol Pract. 2025 Jul 7:OP2500043.

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