Tailored Support for Young Women with Breast Cancer: Survey-Informed Peer-Based Intervention

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

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BACKGROUND AND METHODS

- Low self-esteem and worse body image are common psychosocial challenges among young women with breast cancer. Treatment-related changes in appearance often intensify these concerns and affect identity, social interactions, sexual health and QoL.
- Younger patients may also struggle to maintain peer and partner relationships, as treatment can feel isolating and disrupt a sense of normalcy during young adulthood.
- Emerging evidence supports integrating aesthetic and wellness-based interventions to improve body image and self-esteem during and after treatment.
- To address these unique needs, MSKCC launched the Young Women with Breast Cancer Program (YWBCP) for women diagnosed at age 45 or younger.
- From May 2023 to February 2025 the YWBCP administered online surveys at time of diagnosis (intake) (n=1306) and at six - month follow up (n=639). 984 (73%) completed the intake and 354 (55%) completed the six-month surveys, respectively. 342 (N) patients completed both surveys, allowing for paired analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Patient Demographics and Treatments* (N=342)

Patient Characteristics		n	%
Age (years)	Mean, Median (IQR)	39.4, 41 (36-43)	
Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino	38	15%
	Non-Hispanic/Latino	221	85%
Marital Status	Married/Partner	222	65%
	Single	103	30%
	Divorced/Separated	10	3%
	Other	7	2%
Race	Black	25	7.3%
	White	179	52%
	Asian	46	13%
	Other	92	27%
Stage	0	48	17%
	1	116	42%
	2	73	26%
	3	34	12%
	4	10	4%
Breast Surgery	Mastectomy	130	46%
	Lumpectomy	101	37%
	No	111	16%
LN Surgery	Yes	222	79%
	No	59	21%
Chemotherapy	Yes	169	60%
	No	112	40%
Endocrine Therapy	Anastrozole	33	12%
	Exemestane	18	6%
	Letrozole	44	16%
	Tamoxifen	94	34%
	No	92	33%
GnRH Agonist	Yes	123	44%
	No	170	56%

*61 patients were not treated at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center but completed both intake and six-month surveys.

RESULTS

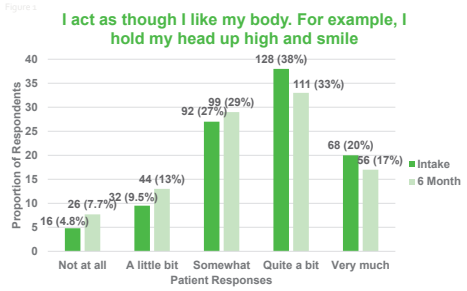
PATIENT CONCERNS AND PREFERENCES

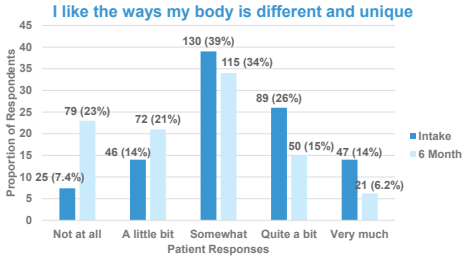
Table 2: Support Services and Social Work Preferences (N=342)

Survey Question	Intake n(%)	6-Months n(%)
Are you worried about and of the following? Check all that apply (Intake: n=264; 6M:n=225)		
Health insurance	83 (31%)	69 (31%)
Cancer's affect on friends/family	180 (68%)	94 (42%)
Money problems	106 (40%)	116 (52%)
Relationships	58 (22%)	81 (36%)
Discussing cancer w/ other	106 (40%)	56 (25%)
Trouble with parenting	72 (27%)	38 (17%)
Trouble with school or work	100 (38%)	73 (32%)
Currently, do you want information about any of the following support services? Check all that apply (Intake: n=212; 6M: n=153)		
Educational programs	77(36%)	45 (29%)
Individual therapy	122 (62%)	83 (54%)
Mental health resources	65 (31%)	42 (27%)
Peer-to-peer programs	67 (32%)	41 (27%)
Support for my family	127 (60%)	33 (22%)
Support group/group therapy	113 (53%)	59 (39%)

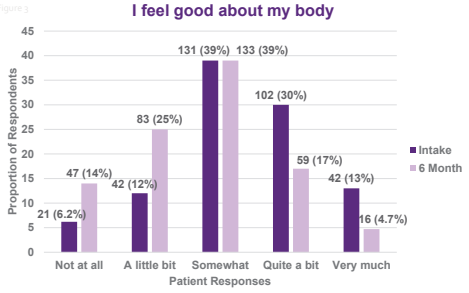
SEXUAL HEALTH AND SEXUALITY OUTCOMES

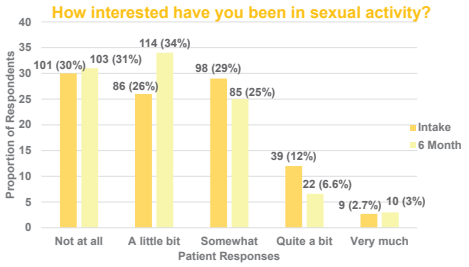
Figure 1-8 : YWBCP Paired Dataset (N=342)

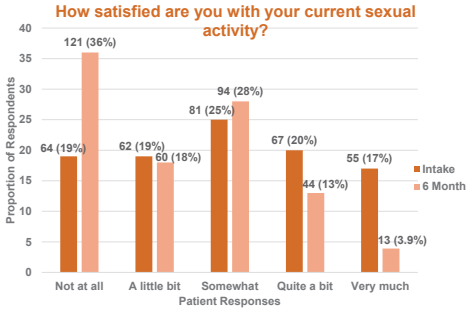


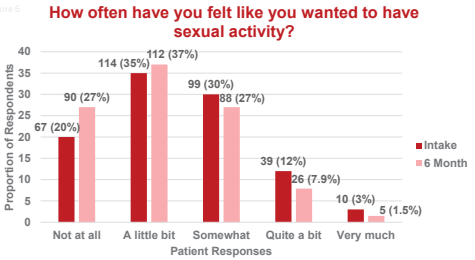


RESULTS









SURVEY-INFORMED INTERVENTION

A DAY OF WELLNESS, BEAUTY, AND COMMUNITY: QUALATATIVE RESPONSES

- Survey findings guided the design of a targeted wellness intervention.
- MSKCC hosted an in-person wellness and beauty event on June 27, 2025.
- The event featured therapeutic beauty services, educational workshops, group wellness activities, and a facilitated lunch with social work, fertility, sexual health and Integrative Medicine clinicians.

"The event was a deeply inspiring and empowering experience. It created a **safe, supportive** space for us women to **connect** with one another. I think it was a fantastic way to focus on **self-care**, **confidence**, and **community**. Being surrounded by other **young women** going through **the same thing** reminded me **I'm not alone**." – Participant #1

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"It made something that can feel **extremely isolating** a lot **less lonely**. I left the day with a bunch of new **connections** that can help guide and **support** me through my treatment." – Participant #2

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"The workshops helped me feel a lot **more comfortable** with the challenges I'm facing and more **normal** for what I'm going through." – Participant #3

"I found the gathering to be a fantastic demonstration of MSK's commitment to **supporting patients** and for **patient community building**. I genuinely look forward to the next event." – Participant #4

CONCLUSIONS

- Survey data and patient feedback highlight the need for age-specific psychosocial programming that addresses evolving concerns around identity, body image, and emotional support.
- Integrating aesthetic and wellness services into care may offer a meaningful way to enhance self-esteem, reduce isolation, and increase engagement with hospital-based supportive services.
- The YWBCP will continue to develop specialized programming and services to support the concerns and address young patients' needs.
- Further analysis of the six-month and one-year surveys will be crucial in identifying programmatic and service gaps, guiding the development of evidence-based interventions.