

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Breast Cancer and Sexuality

Professor Jane Ussher, Associate Professor Janette Perz, and Dr Emilee Gilbert of the Centre for Health Research, are investigating the impact of breast cancer on the sexual wellbeing of women. This project is funded by Breast Cancer Network Australia.

'Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Australia', explains Professor Ussher. 'As well as the known health issues related to breast cancer and its treatment, knowledge of how this affects women's sexuality is also important. While studies have been done exploring this, we needed research to determine what information and support is required to better assist women with sexual wellbeing issues. We also needed to find out what barriers are encountered by women in obtaining this information and support; what type of information they need; which health professionals they would prefer to speak to and how many women experience adverse effects on their sexual wellbeing and their relationships due to breast cancer. It's also important to know if health professionals are aware of these issues and if they initiate discussions with their clients about sexuality as part of their consultations.'

The project conducted studies with two groups: women who have breast cancer; and the health care professionals who assist them. An online survey of 2,500 women who have breast cancer, made use of the large and diverse membership of Breast Cancer Network Australia. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with both groups and 157 healthcare professionals were surveyed.



Findings from this research have been used to inform Breast Cancer Network Australia's information strategies for both women and health professionals. A comprehensive booklet about sexual wellbeing for women with breast cancer has been widely distributed nationally with about 6000 copies to date. The research informs a balanced and more holistic health care model for Australian women with breast cancer.

Project Title: Sexual Wellbeing and Breast Cancer Research

Funding has been set at: \$30,000

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http://www.uws.edu.au/health_services_and_outcomes_research/

<http://www.bcna.org.au/living-breast-cancer/sexual-wellbeing>

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