Baseline Anxiety Affects Adjustment to Cancer

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Women who feel chronic anxiety or suppress anxiety in daily life are more likely to be traumatized by a diagnosis of breast cancer, compared with those who are generally less anxious, said Yumi Iwamitsu, Ph.D., of Kitasato University, Kanagawa, Japan, and colleagues.

The investigators examined the differences in emotional responses among 21 women who had received a diagnosis of breast cancer and 72 women who had benign tumors. Their mean age was 46 years.

Each woman completed the Profile of Mood States (POMS), the Courtauld Emotional Control Scale, and the Manifest Anxiety Scale during a first visit to an outpatient clinic for a breast biopsy (Psychosomatics 2005;46:19-24). They completed the POMS again after a second visit at which they learned the biopsy results.

Both the breast cancer patients and benign tumor patients were assigned to either low anxiety or high anxiety subgroups based on the Manifest Anxiety Scale scores, and either negative emotion suppression or negative emotion expression groups based on the Courtauld Emotional Control Scale scores. The researchers compared POMS scores before and after biopsy results among the eight subgroups.

In women with breast cancer, the total mood disturbance scores were significantly higher among those in the high anxiety subgroup than in the low anxiety subgroup. Those scores were higher in the negative emotion suppression group than in the negative emotion expression group.

Among women with benign tumors, those in the high anxiety subgroup showed higher overall total mood disturbance scores at the first visit. The total mood disturbance scores in the negative emotion expression group were not significantly different between the first and second clinic visits, regardless of the diagnosis. ■