Abstract

Background: Breast cancer is the most common malignancy in Brazilian women. In recent years, there has been great progress in and an increasing number of breast-conserving surgical techniques; however, immediate or late morbidity after surgery, in the form of functional impairment and pain, remains a significant clinical problem. Objective: To investigate the relationship between late upper limb functional impairment and the quality of life in women subjected to breast cancer surgery. Method: A total of 81 women participated in the study, with the length of time since surgery ranging from one to five years. A survey of upper limb complaints reported by patients was conducted, and the questionnaires Disabilities of the Arm, Shoulder, and Hand (DASH) and the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC QLQC-30 and BR23) were applied. Results: The correlation between the DASH score and the length of time since surgery determined that the longer the time since surgery, the greater the difficulties in functionality of the upper limb (r=0.459; p<0.0001). A statistically significant correlation was observed between the DASH score and health-related quality of life. Conclusion: Late functional impairment had a significant impact on upper limb function in everyday life and health-related quality of life for women who underwent breast cancer surgery.

Keywords

Breast cancer, upper limb, quality of life, rehabilitation.