

JOINT EVENT

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Women's experience of acute skin toxicity following radiation therapy in breast cancerEivind Richter Andersen¹, Aud Mette Myklebust², Grethe Eilertsen² and Siren Eriksen^{2,3}¹Stavanger University Hospital, Norway²University College of Southeast Norway, Norway³Vest fold Hospital Trust, Norway

Purpose: Acute skin toxicity is experienced by 70%–100% of patients receiving radiation therapy following breast cancer. Most studies focus on skin appearances and treatment of such reactions, not the experience. Increased knowledge about patients' experience will contribute to provide tailored patient care. Thus, the purpose was to investigate patients' experiences of acute skin toxicity following radiation therapy for breast cancer.

Patients & Methods: Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with seven women, 2–3 weeks post-treatment. Five broad areas of inquiry were investigated: 1) experiences from the development of skin reactions; 2) experiences in day-to-day life; 3) coping strategies; 4) experiences of information; and 5) experiences from the aftercare. The interviews were analyzed in line with qualitative content analysis.

Results: The main theme: "Not so bad itself, but it comes on top of everything else" was identified, based upon three categories: 1) unique experience of the skin; 2) it is something about the psychological aspect; and 3) experience of information.

Conclusion: Acute skin toxicity following breast cancer treatment may affect many dimensions of patients' lives. Experiences are complex, individual, and not necessarily consistent with visible changes of the skin. A holistic approach is necessary to provide treatment and support according to patients' individual needs.

Biography

Eivind Richter Andersen works as a Radiation Therapist at Stavanger University Hospital in Norway. He is especially devoted in patient follow-up and radiation induced side effects, focusing on patient perspective.

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