

Title:**The Use of Education Groups for Women with Breast Oedema****Abstract:**

Breast oedema can occur after treatment for breast cancer with or without arm lymphoedema. Often symptoms are minimised or ignored and thought to resolve over time, however their impact on quality of life can be significant. Treatment of breast cancer has improved over the last decade and the number of women undergoing breast-conserving surgery has increased. Most of these women will also have adjuvant therapy such as radiotherapy.

With increased numbers of women being seen with breast oedema and the limitations in the capacity of the service it was proposed to run group sessions to specifically educate about breast oedema.

The aim of the group was to give women an opportunity to discuss psychosocial issues, to give them information about the anatomy of the breast and lymphatic system, risk factors and clinical features of breast oedema and to teach self management strategies.

Although this commenced as an education based group it soon became apparent that the significant psychological impact of breast oedema needed to be acknowledged and addressed for some women in the group before they were able to deal with the physical implications and the management of symptoms.

Women generally felt that health professionals minimised the impact of the breast oedema which heightened their distress and anxiety about the oedema. In addition they were concerned about recurrence, the associated pain and the constant reminder of their cancer when they were attempting to 'recover'.

Changes to workshop format and recommendations for future programs will be presented in this paper.