

SELF-REPORTED SYMPTOMS AND MANAGEMENT BY MIDWESTERN BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS

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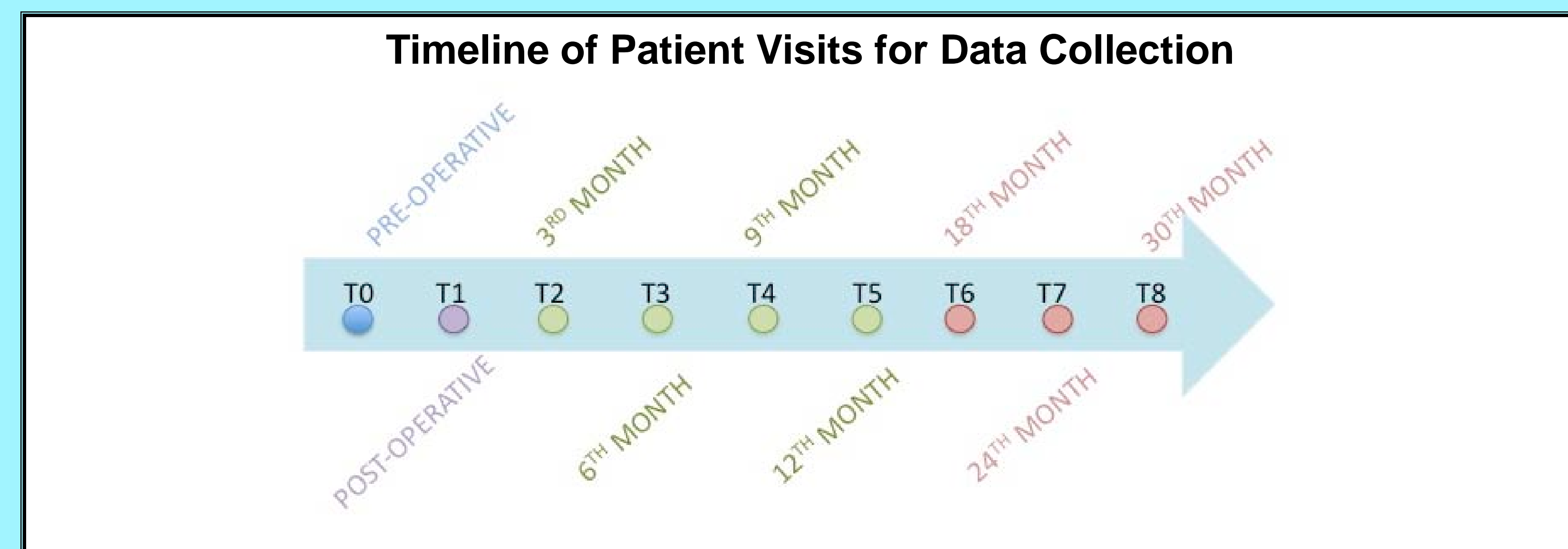
BACKGROUND

- Lymphedema (LE) is a life-long potential consequence of breast cancer treatment that may affect quality of life of breast cancer survivors in long-term survivorship.
- Previous studies reported that about 2 million women living with breast cancer are at a lifetime risk for LE development.
- Information from self-reported lymphedema symptoms and its management will provide potential early detection and intervention to manage LE.
- The purposes of this study were:
 - To report the frequency of occurrence of commonly self-reported LE symptoms following breast cancer diagnosis and treatment.
 - To find the most commonly reported self-management actions taken for the five LE symptoms.

METHODS

- The sample was comprised of 337 pre-op breast cancer survivors.
- Data were collected at pre-op, post-op, every three months for one year, and every six months through thirty months.
- Symptom and symptom management data were collected by nurse interviews in a laboratory visit, double-entered, cleaned, and archived.
- De-identified data were analyzed through editing style content analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 2001) by three undergraduate nursing and pre-nursing research students under the guidance of the faculty researchers. The team met regularly to discuss the content analysis, including tallying, labeling, and consolidation of categories.
- General descriptive statistics were used to summarize the reported frequency of the reviewed symptoms.
- The team reviewed the self-management actions for each of the five symptoms, eliciting themes from the data for and across symptoms.

METHODS (CONTINUED)



RESULTS

- Tenderness, firmness/tightness, aching, swelling, and heaviness were the most commonly self-reported LE symptoms among the Midwestern breast cancer survivors (Figure 1).
- Taking medicine was the most common self-care management strategy to reduce tenderness and aching symptoms, whereas arm elevation was commonly reported as a self-care management for heaviness and swelling symptoms. Finally, exercise was the most common self-care management strategy to reduce firmness/tightness by the Midwestern breast cancer survivors (Table 1).

Five Symptoms Experienced by Breast Cancer Survivors

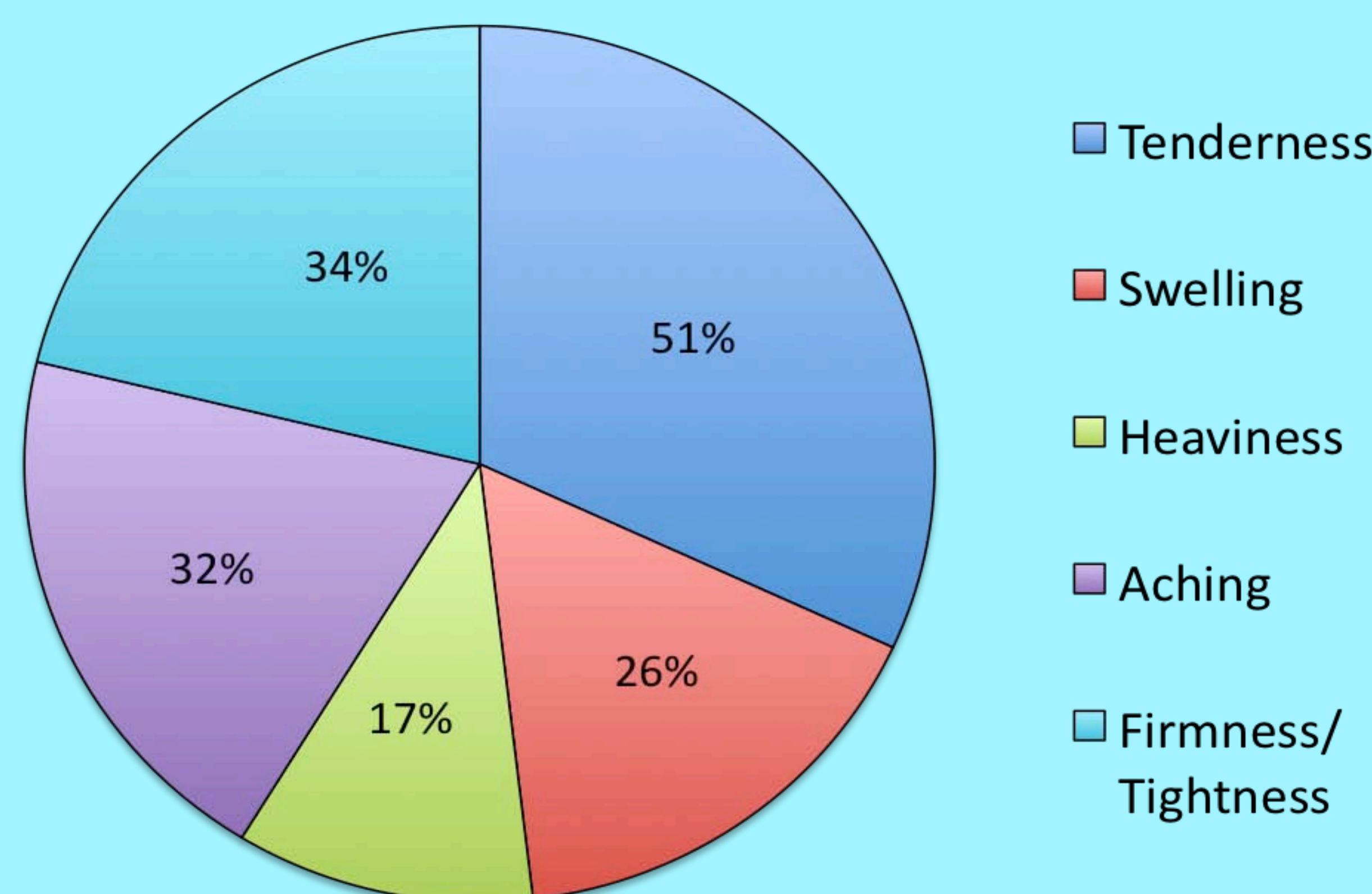


Figure 1 Five of the most commonly self-reported LE symptoms among Midwestern breast cancer survivors

RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Table 1 The top five self-care management strategies for all five symptoms

Self-reported LE symptoms	Self-care Management Strategies	
	Strategies	Frequency
Tenderness	Medicine	386
	Exercise	67
	Massage	58
	Elevate	58
	Ice pack	31
Firmness/Tightness	Exercise	124
	Wrapping	121
	Elevate	113
	Sleeve	112
	Stretching	104
Aching	Medicine	432
	Exercise	38
	Elevate	38
	Rest	29
	Massage	26
Swelling	Elevate	56
	Medicine	56
	Sleeve	43
	Ice Pack	38
	Massage	31
Heaviness	Elevate	67
	Rest	53
	Exercise	31
	Medicine	19
	Massage	16

IMPLICATIONS

- The findings of this study can assist health care providers in educating women with breast cancer about early detection and management of LE.
- Further research is needed to confirm if subjective LE symptoms are associated with objective measures such as limb volume circumferential measure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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