Addressing Body Image in Oncology

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Outline

- What is Body Image?
- Why is Body Image so important?
- Body Image theory and wider context
- What affects Body confidence/satisfaction
- Cancer and Body Image
- Impact of negative Body Image
- Assessing Body Image
- Addressing Body Image: Interventions to help
What is Body Image?
WHAT IS BODY IMAGE?

Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception. These feelings can be positive, negative or both and are influenced by individual and environmental factors.
Why is Body Image so important?

- Part of who we are
- Central to self-worth and self-identity
- How we recognise each other
- Impacts life on a daily basis
- How we think others value us
- Key for social interactions

Centre of Appearance Research, 2018
Body Image theory (Cash, 2012)

- Body Image Investment: Cognitive, behavioural & emotional importance that people place on their physical appearance.
- It is about the entire body and functioning.
- Affects women more than men.
- Occurs within variety of ethnic groups and age groups.
- Largest body of research in oncology is with breast cancer and head & neck patients.
- More likely to occur in long term survivorship.
What impacts on body confidence?

- Media images of ideal shape
- Influence of family & peers
- Individual psychological/physiological factors
- Having a tendency to compare yourself to others
Striving to meet body image ideals through the ages

Egyptian - slenderness
Ancient Greece - muscles
Renaissance- voluptuous
Victorian hour-glass
1920’s
60-70’s
80’s
90’s
Challenging media today
How does cancer affect Body Image?

- Treatment - radiotherapy, chemotherapy, surgery
- Weight changes,
- Hair loss
- Limb/body part loss/changes - amputation, mastectomy
- Skin changes
- Stretch marks
- Loss of function - bowel/ bladder - colostomy
- Hidden changes - loss of fertility, impotence
- Mutilating surgery
- Sensory changes - pain, numbness
- Fatigue
- Body letting you down
- Loss of femininity/masculinity
Body Image patient perceptions

- [Link](https://youtu.be/X2KbXDdBRgA)
The psychological & social impact is extensive & enduring (see Fingeret & Teoh, 2018)

- Body dissatisfaction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Avoidance
- Withdrawal
- Self esteem
- Quality of life
- Feelings of femininity/masculinity

- Feelings of attractiveness
- Feeling ‘less whole’
- Intimate & romantic relationships
- Dealing with the reactions of other people
- Decisions about treatment
- Loss of function
- Act as a reminder
Tips to assess Body Image

- History of body image issues?
- Who should we talk to about Body Image issues?
- Confidence to start conversations
- Looking out for signs of negative body image
- Is the person preoccupied with body image changes?
- Do they avoid images of themselves?
- Complete a Body image scale
- Does it impact on life or function?
- Is someone emotionally distressed?
How to have conversations

- Listen to patients perspective regardless of whether appearance changes are noticeable.
- Chance to express emotions not just trying to solve
- Listening well- giving space to talk
- Tell me more, what is that like for you?
- 3 C’s- body image issues are COMMON
- Ask about specific CONCERNS
- Ask about CONSEQUENCES- emotional, social, occupational functioning
A toolbox of interventions & strategies

- Peer Support & Support groups
- Mindfulness
- Healthy eating & wellbeing
- Psychological support/CBT interventions
- Exercise
- Camouflage and beauty treatments
TYA Body Image Support group
General strategies to improve Body Image

• Increasing individual resilience/self evaluation
• Encourage people to recognise that emotional qualities are equally as important as physical appearance
• Take care of self- sleep, exercise, nutrition
• Increase confidence with skills and interests
• Confidence to respond to other people- questions/ focus
• Be critical viewer of social media
• Taking control
• Humour????
Key message

• AHP’s are valuable roles for addressing body image issues
• Recognise body image issues
• Open up conversations
• The value of exercise and engagement in activities
Signposting

Psychologist
Counselling
Changing Faces charity
Red Cross Camouflage service
Body Image movement
Centre for Appearance Research
Spreading the word

- Poster presentations/ conferences
- Publications- Body confident future
- Liaison with other TYA units to develop their groups
- Journal article