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### Original Articles

#### **Relationships between emotional control, adjustment to cancer and depression and anxiety in breast cancer patients**

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#### Abstract

The possible relationship between psychological responses among breast cancer patients and disease outcome continues to be an area of controversy and debate. Two parallel findings are reported separately in the literature: first, that emotional control is more common among women with breast cancer than in women with benign breast disease or

in healthy controls and second, that a helpless attitude towards the disease is related to a poor prognosis.

These previously unrelated psychological responses are examined here in a group of women ( $N = 359$ ) with early stage breast cancer, who were seen one to three months after diagnosis. The relationships between emotional control, adjustment to cancer and psychological morbidity were examined. Prevalence levels of 16 and 6% were observed for anxiety and depression respectively, which are lower than reported more generally in the literature. The results indicated a highly significant association between scores for the tendency to control emotional reactions and a fatalistic attitude toward cancer. A significant association was observed between anger control and a helpless attitude. Psychological morbidity was also linked to type of adjustment to cancer. The data are interpreted in terms of a process model of psychological responses which suggests that emotional control (an important component of the Type C behaviour pattern) fatalism, helplessness and psychological morbidity are linked.