



## SPIRITUAL THERAPY IN BREAST CANCER PATIENTS : SCOPING REVIEW

Zakariyati<sup>a,b</sup>, Ariyanti Saleh<sup>\*c</sup>, Prihantono<sup>d</sup>, Erfina<sup>c</sup>, Abdul Thalib<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Doctoral student program of medicine, Medical Faculty at Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia.

<sup>b</sup>Pelamonia Institute of Health Sciences Kesdam XIV/ Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia

<sup>c</sup>Faculty of Nursing, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

<sup>d</sup>Department of Surgical Science, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia.

<sup>e</sup>Nursing Departement, High School of Health Science Pasapua Ambon, Ambon, Indonesia

**\*Corresponding Author** : E-mail Address : [ariyantisaleh@unhas.ac.id](mailto:ariyantisaleh@unhas.ac.id)

### Abstract

**Introduction** : The increase in the number of cases of breast cancer both in the world and in Indonesia in particular is certainly a problem in itself. Breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy/radiotherapy treatment often experience decreased quality of life, anxiety and several other accompanying problems. The aim of this literature review is to see how spiritual therapy can improve the quality of life, reduce anxiety and stress in breast cancer patients. Methods : The literature search was a scoping review, which involved searching related articles from databases such as Pubmed, ScienceDirect, and the Cochrane Library over the last decade (2013-2022) using the boolean "OR" and "AND" with the keywords breast cancer, spirituality, religion and intervention With inclusion criteria, articles about breast cancer that receive spiritual/religious intervention. Results : There are 3 relevant articles according to the inclusion criteria and discussing spiritual therapy interventions for breast cancer patients. Interventions are carried out on patients while they are undergoing treatment at the hospital in the form of prayer and there are 2 articles that help/guide patients to strengthen their faith and pray for themselves. Conclusions: The spiritual needs of breast cancer patients impacts their overall well-being, improves coping mechanisms, lowers stress and increases productivity of breast cancer patients.

**Keywords** : Spiritual therapy, Breast cancer, Coping, Stres, Quality of life

### Introduction

Breast cancer is a highly distressing illness that impacts millions of women worldwide. Globally, there have been approximately 2.3 million new instances of breast cancer, resulting in around 685,000 fatalities<sup>1</sup>. It is projected that in 2023, the United States will witness 297,790 new occurrences of invasive breast cancer in women and 2,800 in men<sup>2</sup>. According to the American Cancer Society, the overall global cancer burden is anticipated to reach 28.4 million cases by 2040, marking a significant 47% increase over the cancer burden in 2020<sup>3</sup>.



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In addition to the physical and emotional impact, breast cancer patients often face spiritual challenges as they struggle through their disease journey. The spiritual approach has emerged as an important component in providing holistic health care to cancer patients, helping them address the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of their diagnosis<sup>4</sup>.

Many research investigations have delved into the influence of spirituality in the experiences of individuals with cancer, particularly those with breast cancer. Interventions targeting aspects like spiritual well-being, the meaning of life, and alleviating depression demonstrated moderate yet noteworthy impacts on patients dealing with breast cancer<sup>5,6</sup>.

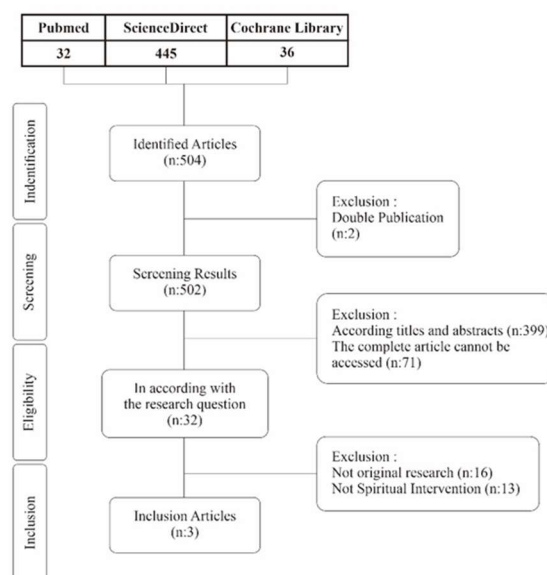
Recognizing the significance of spirituality in the lives of individuals with cancer, it becomes crucial to pursue additional research in this domain. Few investigations have thus far delved into the influence of spirituality in the context of breast cancer patients, and gaining insights into how spirituality impacts their coping strategies is essential<sup>7,8</sup>.

This coverage review aimed to explore the existing literature on spiritual therapy among breast cancer patients. By conducting a comprehensive literature search, we aim to identify relevant studies examining spiritual therapy in breast cancer patients.

## Method

### Design

The current investigation is conducted as a scoping review, a research method designed to comprehensively map the existing body of literature, emphasizing its quantity, attributes, and features. The primary objective of a scoping review is to provide a summary of and distribute the outcomes of previous research while pinpointing the inadequacies or voids in earlier studies<sup>9</sup>.



## Figure 1 Flowchart PRISMA

### Article Criteria

To focus the search for this review article, in this study inclusion criteria were made: (1) Breast cancer, (2) Spiritual and religious, (3) published in the range of 2013-2023. The question in this study is what is the spiritual/religious approach in patients with breast cancer?

### Article Search

To conduct this coverage review, we will use a systematic search strategy. We will search several databases, including PubMed, Cochrane Library and Science Direct using appropriate keywords related to breast cancer, spirituality i.e. breast cancer AND Religious OR Religious OR Spirituality OR Spiritual. We will also review relevant article references to ensure a comprehensive search within the last 10 years.

### Selection studies

A total of 504 were identified from 3 database searches with pubmed : 32, cochrane library: 36, and sciencedirect: 445. Articles are then screened by including articles published in the last 10 years according to the research question and excluding articles that are double published and cannot be accessed completely. From this result, 2 articles were excluded from double publications, 399 were excluded based on titles and abstracts, 71 articles were excluded that could not be accessed completely. Out of the 32 articles, 16 were eliminated from consideration as they did not constitute original research and 13 articles because they were not spiritual interventions. The articles included are 3 research articles (Figure 1).

### Results

Literature searches were conducted on 3 data base sources namely pubmed, science direct and cochrane library and obtained as many as 504 articles discussing spirituality in patients with breast cancer. However, after exclusion according to the research question, only 3 articles described spiritual therapeutic interventions in breast cancer patients.

From the 3 articles obtained, it is explained that spiritual therapy has been given to patients with breast cancer in several ways, some do spiritual therapy with help from others, namely by helping to pray<sup>10,11,12</sup>.

Spiritual therapy has a positive impact on Spiritual Well Being, Quality Of Life (Qol), Religious Health, Existential Health<sup>11</sup>, and help lower stress and improve patient coping<sup>10</sup> The duration of therapy varies, some do it 6 weeks<sup>11</sup> and 9 months (12)(Table .1)<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1. Synthesis of spiritual grid therapy in patients with breast cancer**

No	Country	Method	Purpose	Sample	Intervention	Instrument	Result	Conclusion
1.	Brazil <sup>10</sup>	A randomized clinical trial	To assess the impact of intercessory prayer on the psychological, spiritual, and physiological well-being of breast cancer patients receiving radiotherapy.	31 participants. It consisted of 15 participants in the Control Group and 16 participants in the Intervention Group	Intercessory prayer	Spiritual Distress Scale, CRE-Breve Scale (Religious Coping Scale), HADS, Amylase Saliva	This study showed that intercessory prayer has a positive effect on distress levels, coping, reducing anxiety and depression levels.	Intercessory prayer is effective for helping to lower stress, improve coping and reduce anxiety and depression in patients
2	Iran <sup>12</sup>	Quasi experimental project of pretest posttest type with a control group	Investigate the efficacy of spiritual group therapy in enhancing the quality of life and spiritual well-being in individuals dealing with breast cancer.	A total of 24 participants were divided into two groups through random allocation: one being the experimental group, consisting of 12 individuals, and the other being the control group, which also included 12 individuals	Spiritual group therapy	WHOQOL-26 and SWB-20	The results showed improved quality of life and spiritual well-being in the experimental group.	Utilizing spiritual group therapy has the potential to enhance the quality of life and promote spiritual well-being, including religious health and existential health, in individuals with breast cancer
3	Iran <sup>11</sup>	A randomized controlled trial	Explore how spiritual therapy interventions can enhance the spiritual well-being and quality of life (QOL) of Iranian women diagnosed	Intervention (n = 34) or control group (n = 31)	6-week spirituality-based intervention	The assessment tools used in this study included the FACIT-Sp12 and QLQ-C30.	There were significant differences between the arms of the study. A significant positive correlation was detected between meaning and	The findings of this study propose that engaging in a spiritual therapy program is linked to enhancements in spiritual well-being

			with breast cancer.				peace with all functional subscales at the European Organization	and quality of life (QOL).
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## Discussion

A review of existing literature concerning spiritual therapy in breast cancer patients has highlighted several crucial factors to enhance service delivery. Initially, it is evident from the literature review that spirituality holds significant importance in the overall well-being and quality of life for cancer patients as a whole<sup>13</sup>. Research consistently underscores that integrating spirituality into the care of cancer patients can lead to improved coping, enhanced physical well-being, and more effective symptom management. Given these insights, healthcare providers should give due consideration to addressing the spiritual needs of breast cancer patients, as this has the potential to enhance their overall treatment experience.

Research indicates that individuals with strong religious and spiritual convictions are more inclined to seek medical assistance for breast cancer symptoms. This underscores the significance of incorporating patient preferences and beliefs into healthcare practices. Furthermore, this literature review underscores the vital role of spirituality in assisting breast cancer patients in coping with their diagnosis. Patients often turn to spirituality and religion for solace, hope, and a sense of purpose in their cancer journey. For instance, in the Islamic context, the utilization of Quranic murottal therapy has been shown to alleviate the pain experienced by breast cancer patients<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, murottal therapy has the potential to instill a sense of serenity in breast cancer survivors, enabling them to fulfill their family responsibilities<sup>15</sup>.

Spiritual therapy is carried out in the hospital when the patient comes to carry out radiotherapy / radiation so that this will have an impact on the length of the intervention because of waiting for the patient's therapy schedule. The fastest intervention was carried out for 6 weeks with a duration of 6 times a week<sup>11</sup> So that by increasing the frequency of management will certainly help patients to overcome the impact of breast cancer management they experience.

Health care providers can collaborate with spiritual leaders such as clerics or pastors to develop personalized care plans that integrate medical and spiritual aspects such as by coming and praying for patients during hospital adherence<sup>10</sup>. This interdisciplinary approach recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, and aims to meet the holistic needs of breast cancer patients<sup>16,17</sup>

In addition, health care providers must also pay attention to the cultural and religious background of breast cancer patients<sup>18</sup> By understanding and respecting their diverse beliefs and practices, healthcare providers can create a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters trust and open communication. This, in turn, can improve the patient-provider relationship and facilitate more effective care.

## Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted the importance of spirituality in the care of breast cancer patients. Health care providers should prioritize meeting patients' spiritual needs, as this can have a significant impact on their overall well-being and coping mechanisms.

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