

Brain metastases secondary to breast cancer: symptoms, prognosis and evolution

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ABSTRACT

Aims and background. Brain metastases confer a worse prognosis to breast cancer because they determine a severe increase in mortality. The aim of this study was to identify the early symptoms in patients with brain metastases after breast cancer treatment and to evaluate the median survival rate in women with single and operable brain lesions.

Patients and methods. We examined 43 patients with brain metastases secondary to breast cancer treated in the Oncological Institute Prof I Chiricuță, Cluj-Napoca, during the period 2000-2006.

Results. The median interval between the breast cancer diagnosis and detection of central nervous metastases was 21 months. The most frequent symptoms were headache, gait disturbance, nausea and vomiting. Patients with a single brain lesion had a median survival of 23 months compared to only 7 months in case of patients with multiple brain metastases.

Conclusions. The prognosis is worse in patients with solitary brain metastases secondary to breast cancer than in patients who present extracranial metastases. Among factors considered favorable in these patients are a single brain lesion, accessibility to surgery, and the absence of associated extracranial metastases.

Key words: brain metastases, breast cancer, prognostic factors, whole brain radiotherapy.

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