



# RTT

## Call for the Involvement of Radiation Therapists in the Management of Post-Surgical Lymphoedema in Breast Cancer Patients Before Radiotherapy

*A Literature Review*

### ABSTRACT

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer worldwide, and treatment typically involves surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. One possible side-effect of these treatments is lymphoedema, which is the accumulation of lymphatic fluid in the limb that is affected by the cancer. Physiotherapy is an effective way to manage lymphoedema, but in this literature review, the author explores whether radiation therapists can assist in the management of post-surgical lymphoedema before they apply radiotherapy to breast cancer patients.

### Introduction

The treatment of breast cancer usually involves surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Lymphoedema is a potential complication of these treatments. Lymphoedema is characterised by a build-up of lymphatic fluid in the affected limb, and physiotherapy has been shown to be an effective treatment. However, the involvement of radiation therapists in the management of post-surgical lymphoedema in breast-cancer patients before radiotherapy has not been examined thoroughly.

### Methods

The literature was reviewed through searches of various electronic databases such as PubMed, MEDLINE, and the Cochrane Library. The search terms used included breast cancer, lymphoedema, physiotherapy, radiotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery. Only peer-reviewed articles published in English were selected for review.

### Results

Several studies were found in which the role of radiation therapists in the management of post-surgical lymphoedema in breast-cancer patients before radiotherapy had been examined. The study findings suggested that radiation therapists could help to identify patients at risk of developing lymphoedema and could assist with the implementation of physiotherapy interventions. Also, radiation therapists could monitor the development and progression of lymphoedema during and after radiotherapy and could provide information to patients on how they could manage their symptoms.

### Conclusion

The evidence suggests that radiation therapists can be valuable in the management of post-surgical lymphoedema in breast-cancer patients before radiotherapy. However, further research is required to determine the optimal role and responsibilities of radiation therapists in this area.

### Keywords

Breast cancer, lymphoedema, physiotherapy, radiotherapy, radiation therapist, surgery.

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