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A study investigating the potential benefits to young women (aged 18-45 years) with breast cancer participating in the Younger Women's Forum – a psycho-educational intervention

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Aim: To examine expectations, experiences and changes in quality of life among young women affected by breast cancer participating in the Younger Women's Forum (YWF).

Procedures: The study uses a combined quantitative and qualitative methodological approach. All participants attending a YWF during October 2005 -June 2006 are invited to take part in the study and written informed consent obtained. Participants are asked to complete a questionnaire incorporating the FACT-B quality of life instrument one month prior to attending the YWF and three months post YWF. Participants are also asked to complete an immediate programme evaluation, and invited to participate in a focus group discussion six months after they attended a YWF. Ethical approval was obtained by Middlesex University.

Findings: Data collection and formal analysis is ongoing. Preliminary findings will be presented on people's experiences of the YWF, impact on quality of life, and key themes relating to people's perceptions of the long-term benefit of attending the YWF. Immediate programme evaluations already suggest that the YWF offers women a valuable opportunity to meet other young women with breast cancer, reducing their feelings of isolation and providing reassurance that their feelings are 'normal'.

Conclusions: This is the first UK study to examine the potential benefits of the YWF – a new psycho-educational intervention. The findings from our study will have implications for researchers, health professionals and others working in psycho-oncology about the benefit of psycho-educational programmes in promoting the quality of life of young women affected by breast cancer.