

## Body Language Critical During Breast Cancer Chemotherapy



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Experts have used an Italian study to achieve a universal standard when measuring a cancer patient's distress towards their appearance, to allow physicians and psychologists to recommend the next step in treatment.

A new study produced by an interdisciplinary team led by [Prof. Antonio Giordano](#), director of the Sbarro Institute for Cancer Research and Molecular Medicine at Temple University, tracks the development process and efficacy of the Italian translation of the Derriford Appearance Scale 24 (DAS24), an important clinical tool in identifying quality-of-life issues for breast cancer patients, especially concerns regarding body shame, depression, anxiety, overall appearance and appearance identity.

The study, published in the April 2016 issue of the medical journal [Anticancer Research](#), builds upon the successful transition of the scale across various languages and cultures in both its longer (DAS59) and shorter (DAS24) versions. This represents an important tool, providing surgeons and psychologists with a proven method that gains insight into the levels of distress patients and clients are encountering, thus guiding the direction of the patients treatment plan.

"The Derriford Appearance Scale has enabled clinicians and researchers to tap into distress and dysfunction related to appearance concerns with confidence of a valid and reliable scale," said Timothy Moss, an associate professor of Health Psychology at the University of West of England and one of the project coordinators for the Derriford Appearance Scale. "This Italian version has enabled those working with Italian speakers to make a quick and robust psychological assessment."

The importance of body image during treatment of cancer, in particular breast cancer patients, cannot be understated. Breast cancer has been associated with appearance concerns and issues of appearance identity, as well as satisfaction with treatment and the levels of distress the patient may be experiencing. Experts in clinical practice have described the need for an accurate scale that can determine a given patient's distress. There have been many measurement tools that have sought to solve this problem, but very few have created valid assessments with demonstrated reliability.

"I can feel how a simple instrument like the Derriford Appearance Scale 24 can become an important step in the gold standard of treatment for breast cancer," said Andrea Chirico, the psychologist responsible for the protocol.

"The most emotional part of all of this experience was also being in contact with these patients and feeling all of their emotions and strength at same time."

Experts have expressed the need for a 'gold standard' when measuring a patient's distress towards their appearance. There has also been a lack of emphasis on patient-based studies that both discriminate amongst individuals with different levels of distress and are user friendly for patients and clinicians. The Derriford Appearance Scale is notable for meeting these criteria and is widely used because of this.

The authors of this paper belong to an Italian-American team lead by Professor Antonio Giordano, with the project being funded by [Sbarro Health and Research Organisation](#) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Health, Biotechnology Research Programme in collaboration with the Department of Medicine Surgery and Neuroscience, University of Siena, Italy.

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