Abstract
Purpose
Breast cancer support businesses, retail stores selling mastectomy-related products, are playing an expanding role within healthcare in the USA. As commercial spaces separate from the medical settings where most cancer treatment occurs, these businesses have been largely overlooked in studies of medical care providers and their experiences. The purpose of this paper is to seek to bring to light the meanings and dimensions of the care work provided by breast cancer support staff to newly diagnosed patients.

Design/methodology/approach
This project employed an ethnographic approach centered on the workers at one breast cancer support business. The first author carried out participant observation over a 20-month period and supplemented the observations with staff member interviews.

Findings
The analysis of field notes and interviews revealed two themes or purposes as central to the employees' understanding of their work: defining the organizational setting as a nonmedical space and balancing image enhancement with comforting care. The findings show how values of client-centered care can be enacted in a for-profit healthcare setting.

Research limitations/implications
This study is limited to one for-profit support business in the southeastern USA.

Practical implications
Mastectomy supply businesses appear to offer a kind of support that patients may not be finding elsewhere or at the particular time they need it. Thus the study holds relevance for practitioners and health policy makers who are seeking to develop more comprehensive care for surgical patients within the established healthcare system.

Originality/value
This study gives a detailed picture of breast cancer support work, including the value premises and meanings it holds for support workers.

Keywords
Compassionate care, Breast cancer support, Healthcare ethnography
Learn about breast cancer causes, symptoms, tests, recovery, and prevention. Discover the types of treatments such as surgery and drug therapies as well as the survival rate for breast cancer. Breast-conserving surgery removes the cancer and some healthy tissue around it, but not the breast. It can be difficult to keep up with activities of daily life, and make patients feel isolated or overwhelmed. Friends and family can be invaluable sources of support and assistance during this time. Some people choose to join a local or an online support group to share their experiences and spread breast cancer awareness. Breast Reconstructive Surgery. Many women opt to have reconstructive surgery after breast cancer surgery. The impact of a breast cancer diagnosis on work life can vary from person to person. For some people, the effect is minimal. You may have an understanding supervisor, a flexible schedule, and an encouraging team to support you through treatment. For others, there might be some questions about how to manage work and treatment: What do I tell my boss? Should I take time off from work for treatment? How will I pay the bills? This section offers ways to manage the emotional, physical, and legal aspects of balancing your job and your treatment. Learn how you can support National Breast Cancer Foundation and provide help & hope to women now. “ My grandmother is a breast cancer survivor, so I am always looking for meaningful ways to give back. I pray that my involvement is helping someone with a recent diagnosis feel some peace. “ Thara NBCF Volunteer. Volunteer With Us. More Ways to Help. Become a Community Ambassador. Share Your Story. Shop to Support NBCF.