

Purpose

The goal of this proposed study is to examine the perceptions of adult women between the ages of 30 to 60 from Kumasi, Ghana on breast cancer and breast cancer care. The study will also seek to examine the influence of awareness campaigns on general knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions about the disease.

Background

According to WHO, breast cancer is the most common malignancy among women in both developed and developing nations., with an estimated 508, 000 succumbing to the disease in 2011. ([Global Health Estimates, WHO 2013] WHO, 2013) High global prevalence is not associated with uniform survival rates, with patients in lower income countries generally suffering poorer outcomes due to late presentation and financial inability afford regular treatment. ([Coleman et al., 2008] WHO, 2013) One country experiencing this disparity is Ghana; mortality from breast cancer is high in this region is high not only due to late presentation, but also due to a high frequency of triple negative tumors, which are among the most difficult to treat and the most aggressive. (Opoku, Benwell, and Yarney, 2012, Stark et al., 2010, Lamptey and Hodasi, 2007) Cultural beliefs surrounding breast cancer have been studied before (Opoku, Benwell, and Yarney, 2012, Mayo et al., 2003) thus the goal of this study will be to augment this body of knowledge by gauging the strength of those beliefs in light of efforts towards greater awareness and health education.

Proposed Method

The study will be conducted using a series of focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Participants will first take part in focus groups containing no more than 6 women each. From those focus groups, a smaller number of individuals will be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews in order to expand on information previously given.

- Study Sample Population
 - 125- 160 women from Kumasi, Ghana
 - ½ current breast cancer patients and ½ women without diagnosis, or
 - ½ rural population and ½ urban population
- Eligibility
 - Between 30-60 years of age
 - Born, raised, and currently live in study area
 - Capable of answering questions by themselves
- Ineligibility
 - Unable to give informed consent to participation
 - Unable to make reliable contact

Scope of Questioning

Construction of cancer in Ghanaian society

- Disease Model
- Alternative Causation



‘Meaning-Making’ of Breast Cancer

- Level of associated anxiety
 - Reasons behind associated anxiety or lack thereof
- Possible stigmatization of breast cancer patients and their families
 - Perceptions on femininity/sex appeal
 - Negative supernatural causes

Perceived Effectiveness of Breast Cancer Education

- What currently exists
 - Breast Care International and other non-profit organizations
 - Government Programs
- How effective are current programs
 - Availability and Accessibility to learning materials
 - Reach of materials (Gender, Age, Educational Level, Practical Efficacy, etc)
 - Regard of need for prevention and early detection
- Limitations

Perceived Effectiveness of Breast Cancer Treatment

- Accessibility/Availability of Treatment
 - Wealth Disparity and Resources
 - Patient-Medical Staff Relations
 - Effect of Outcomes on Perception of Treatment
 - Sources of Care

References

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