Breast Cancer Knowledge, Beliefs and Practices among Female Nurses and Midwives in Ghana

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Abstract

Background
Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women globally. Nurses and Midwives play a pivotal role in public health interventions, particularly in Ghana where physicians and specialists are short in supply. Therefore, an assessment of their current breast cancer knowledge, beliefs and personal practices is essential.

Method
A cross-sectional study was conducted among 251 Nurses and Midwives using self-administered questionnaires.

Results
Overall, participants had low knowledge of breast cancer signs and symptoms. The mean score (SD) was 73.1% ± 3.6 and the lowest score was 34.6%. Forty-four (17.5%) had high knowledge scores. A significant proportion of participants believed in the role of prayer, evil spirits and herbal therapy in the cure of breast cancer.

Conclusions
Compared to other countries, the level of breast cancer knowledge among Nurses and Midwives in Ghana is low. There appears to be a gap in training curriculum; information provided appears unstandardized. Nurses and midwives in Ghana should receive more and better education on breast cancer.

Background

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy among women worldwide [1,2]. Breast cancer is becoming an urgent public health problem in developing countries.

Nurses and midwives can play a pivotal role in any public health intervention involving access to health care services. Knowledge of breast cancer among Nurses and Midwives in Ghana is unknown.

The aim of this study was to describe breast cancer knowledge and beliefs among female nurses and midwives in Ghana.

Method

A 60-item questionnaire divided into five sections was completed by 251 female nurses and midwives in eight healthcare facilities in Accra and Kumasi, Ghana.

Data was analyzed using Stata version 11 [3]. Chi square tests were conducted to identify factors significantly associated with knowledge level. Statistical significance was set at p<0.05

Results

Variable		Number	Percentage
Age	Below 30	81	32.3
	30-39	54	21.5
	40-49	37	14.7
	50 or older	79	31.5
Marital Status	Single	78	31.1
	Married	151	60.2
	Divorced	9	3.6
	Widowed	13	5.2
Religion	Christian	236	94.0
	Muslim	14	5.6
Education	Certificate	51	20.4
	Diploma	145	58.0
	Degree or above	54	21.6
Profession	Nurse	147	58.6
	Midwife	38	15.1
	Both	66	26.3

Knowledge	Correct answer	Correct response %
Breast Cancer is a communicable disease	No	95.6
Most breast lumps are cancerous	No	62.0
Obesity increases the risk of breast cancer	Yes	55.3
Men can develop breast cancer	Yes	78.8
Breast cancer may be inherited	Yes	78.5

Beliefs	Correct answer	Correct response%
Evil spirits can cause breast cancer	False	65.1
Wearing/putting money in your bra can cause breast cancer	False	37.1
Prayer can make breast cancer disappear from an affected breast	False	56.1
A hard blow to the breast may cause breast cancer later in life	False	51.8
Breast cancer can be a result of a curse	False	70.0

Results

❖ Majority of participants had poor knowledge of breast cancer.

❖ Nurses and midwives had similar levels of knowledge about breast cancer.

❖ Less than 25% of the participants had received any breast cancer information since completing their professional training.

❖ Only one-third of nurses and midwives received training on breast cancer in the past 3years.

❖ Women who held local beliefs and superstitions about breast cancer had low levels of knowledge.

❖ Being a widow was the only socioeconomic variable that was associated with knowledge.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The findings of this study suggest low breast cancer knowledge among Ghanaian Nurses and Midwives and the following are key recommendations:

❖ Nurses and midwives in Ghana should receive more and better education on breast cancer.

❖ Health professionals, television and pamphlets tend to provide more accurate sources of information and should be further developed.

❖ If women's groups and churches are used to provide knowledge on breast cancer, then educational efforts need to ensure that the information provided is accurate and appropriate.

❖ Nurses and midwives should be educated about superstitions related to breast cancer.

References
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