

Knowledge and Practice of Breast Self-Examination: A Cross-Sectional Study of Women at Selected Health Centers in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Breast cancer is the leading cause of death for women in sub-Saharan Africa. However, knowledge and practice of breast self-examination (BSE) remains low. This project examined if there is an association between BSE knowledge and practice in a cohort of 100 women in Oyo State, Nigeria. The mean BSE knowledge and practice scores were good. Ninety women performed monthly BSEs. There was no statistically significant association between BSE knowledge and practice.

AT A GLANCE

- Continuous patient education through awareness programs can enhance BSE knowledge and practice, allowing for early detection of breast cancer.
- Nursing education covering crucial BSE-specific patient information needs can augment efforts being made by patient awareness programs.
- Consistent instruction on BSE knowledge and practice can give women better control over their health through informed questions and discussions during clinical encounters.

KEYWORDS

breast self-examination; breast cancer prevention; sub-Saharan Africa

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

10.1188/23.CJON.211-214

Breast cancer remains a global health threat, particularly for sub-Saharan African women (Udoh et al., 2020). Data on mortality in sub-Saharan Africa suggest that breast cancer is not only highly prevalent but also is one of the leading causes of death among women (Bray & Parkin, 2022). Historically, the prevalence of breast cancer has been higher in high-income countries, but there have been steady increases in incidence among Nigerian women who also experience higher mortality rates compared to their global counterparts (Sung et al., 2021; Udoh et al., 2020).

Breast self-examination (BSE) is a vital diagnostic tool because it provides early and timely detection of breast cancer. This can enable women, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, to become active participants during clinical encounters. Based on national guidelines, BSE should be performed once per month (National Breast Cancer Foundation, 2020). Findings suggest that poor BSE practice and inadequate BSE knowledge are significant barriers to preventing breast cancer in women residing in African countries (Johnson, 2019). Despite advancements in breast cancer diagnosis and management in Nigeria, there remains an urgent need to optimize breast cancer prevention strategies, including promotion of BSE practice, which may be achieved through a nationwide awareness program (Ajayi & Faleti, 2017).

Sani et al. (2016) reported that although a significant proportion of northwestern Nigerian women in their study cohort were knowledgeable about BSE, few actually engaged in BSE practice regularly. Lack of BSE skills, lack of BSE information, inadequate time to perform BSE, or no consideration of the relevance of BSE practice were some factors cited as deterrents to practicing BSE (Sani et al., 2016). BSE knowledge alone does not necessarily improve BSE practice (Jegade et al., 2021). Factors associated with BSE knowledge and BSE practice have not been extensively studied in sub-Saharan Africa. In low-resource settings such as Nigeria, access to breast cancer treatment and measures for early diagnosis and prevention