

Breast Cancer

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### **Executive Summary**

This paper documents the facts regarding breast cancer in American women and suggests the counter-measures in terms of health education in a bid to have a safer and cancer free society, although much work is yet to be done. The American Cancer Society (ACS) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are the pillars of the fight against breast cancer and these institutions have recommended the screening of women aged between 55 and 74 years as this is the most affected age groups, with up to 66.7% risk of getting the disease. Women under 45 also have possibilities of contacting breast cancer (12.5%). Men are not in great danger.

Learning materials are a function of reliability, credibility and validity and the ACS and CDC happen to steal the day. However, since only a single health education was needed, I chose the ACS as a result of its specificity and consistence with breast cancer information. CDC is also a good source but it talks about many diseases and our interest is narrowed to breast cancer only. The disease' symptoms, diagnosis, risk factors and treatment options were all discussed at length. It was also noted that the target audience of this health education material are women aged 55-74, most of who are African American as a result of ethnical health care disparities in the United States.

**OUTLINE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....2

INTRIDUCTION.....4

BREAST CANCER STATISTICS.....4

TARGET AUDIENCE.....4

SYMPTOMS.....6

TREATMENT.....6

RECOMMENDED HEALTH LITERACY MATERIAL.....7

REFERENCES.....8

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## **Introduction**

The American Cancer Society (ACS) in association with Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) has for many years worked around the clock to promote health literacy among American men and women. One of the diseases being battled by the ACS and CDC is breast cancer – a monster disease that kills thousands of Americans annually and that shows no signs of slowing down. As far as breast cancer can be observed in scholarly and professional perspectives, thousands are suffering and more will suffer if adequate and sustainable counter-measures are not instituted. Breast cancer is the most serious in the United States behind skin cancer (CDC, 2016; ACS, 2016).

## **Breast Cancer Statistics**

Although breast cancer affects both men and women, the latter are at greater risk. The ACS (2016) maintains that 12% of American women might develop invasive breast cancer during their lifetime. In fact the 2016 breast cancer estimates by the ACS are: (1) around 246,660 new cases of invasive skin cancer will be diagnosed in females, (2) Around 61,000 new cases of carcinoma in situ – non-invasive - (CIS) will be diagnosed (CIS is the earliest form of breast cancer), and (3) Nearly 40,450 females are going to die from breast cancer (ACS, 2016).

## **Target Audience**

ACS (2016) sadly reports that breast cancer is the second commonest cause of cancer death after lung cancer. The probability of breast cancer will cause death in a woman is 0.0278 (2.78%). The rates of deaths arising from breast cancer have been in decline since 1989, with bigger decreases in females aged less than 50 years. The decrease can be attributed to early diagnosis via screening, increased health literacy, and improved therapies and treatments.

Currently in the United States, nearly 2.8 women are survivors of breast cancer. The 2.8 million does include women who have finished treatment and those still being treated. The target audience is associated with risk factors such as gender, age, ethnicity etc. (ACS, 2016).

**Gender:** Women have chances of developing breast cancer than men 100 times over. Although breast cancer affects men also, the scarcity of hormones estrogen and progesterone in males significantly reduce the possibilities of developing the disease.

**Age:** The peril of developing breast cancer magnifies with age. Women aged less than 45 years have a 12.5% of developing breast cancer compared to 66.7% for those aged at least 55 years. These statistics reflect on invasive breast cancer (ACS, 2016).

**Ethnicity:** Statistics are not in favor of African American, Asian and Hispanic women. White women have less financial struggles, meaning they have the opportunity to get quality screening and treatment of breast cancer. Black women do not have the resources for quality diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. Moreover, they attend lesser clinical trials than whites, Hispanics and Asians. This can effect what is being referred to as “semi-automatic exclusion from promising therapies.” Why such a health disparity is still seeing the light of the day in a 21<sup>st</sup> century America remains to be ascertained (ACS, 2016).

Education materials should encompass symptoms, diagnosis, risk factors, and treatment of breast cancer. Risk factors (age, gender, ethnicity etc.) have been discussed already. It is indeed the time the symptoms of breast cancer were known.

## Symptoms

Breast cancer has no visible signs at its early stages, but a small lump in the breast should be enough reason to see a doctor for screening, diagnosis and treatment immediately. Doctors recommend early testing and treatment of cancer as it increases the chances of survival (ACS, 2016).

- Pain in the breast
- Skin irritation or dimpling
- A nipple discharge that is not breast milk
- Swelling of all or part of the breast
- Redness, scaliness or thickening of the nipple or breast skin.

The above are the diagnosable facts about breast cancer (ACS, 2016).

## Treatment

Breast cancer is a dangerous and medically complex illness, but through the most appropriate therapies and treatment, thousands of lives can be saved. There are various forms of treatment, but radiotherapy and surgery are the most common. The type of treatment largely depends on the age, gender, stage of tumor development, the preference and general health of the patient. A patient who is not comfortable with say, surgery should have his opinion respected. Patients who are seriously ill due to other diseases should not undergo radiotherapy. Surgery is suitable for small tumors, but if the cancerous cells have spread to other tissues and organs, radiology would be a great choice. Some of the forms of surgery for breast cancer include but are not limited to lumpectomy (tumor removal), mastectomy (surgical removal of the affected

breast), sentinel odebiopsy (removal of one lymph node), and breast cancer reconstructive surgery (CDC, 2016).

### **Recommended Health Literacy Material**

There is a variety of sources of information regarding breast cancer, but using government-provided ones would have a larger impact on health literacy due to reliability and credibility of information. The first source is the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the other the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These institutions are controlled by the government, meaning whatever information is in there is reliable, valid and credible. ACS & CDC provide invaluable information to the public free of charge and makes health education accessible to all citizens (ACS, 2016; CDC, 2016).

## References

ACS. (2016). Breast Cancer. American Cancer Society. Retrieved from

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