

Cultural Barriers in the Communication of Breast Cancer in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract : This paper aims at verifying the effectiveness of reaching target populations while paying attention to their cultural background when communicating new knowledge, ideas or technology in a multicultural world. Our case study is an experiment on the communication of knowledge on breast cancer in three sub-Saharan countries (Ghana, Tchad, and Cameroon health). The methodology consisted of submitting a semi-structured questionnaire to local populations in some localities in these target countries in order to determine the cultural barriers hindering the effective communication of knowledge on breast cancer. Once this done, sensitization documents on breast cancer were translated into Ewe (Ghana), Mbaye (Tchad), Ghomala', Ewondo, and Ffulde (Cameroon). In each locality, a sensitization programme was organised for two groups. For one group, the cultural barriers discovered were taken into consideration while communicating during the programme whereas in the other group, they were not. Another questionnaire was disseminated after three months to verify the level of appropriation of those who attended the campaign based on Chumbow's appropriation theory. This paper, therefore, discusses some spiritual beliefs, representations and practices in the target African communities hindering effective communication of issues on breast cancer in the target localities. Findings reveal that only 38% of respondents in the group of those for whom cultural barriers were not taken into account during the programme had a high level of appropriation while for the other group, 86% had a high level of appropriation. This is evidence that the communication of issues on breast cancer can be more effective by reaching different populations in a language they best master while paying attention to their culture. Therefore, international communication of new knowledge should be culturally contextualised. Suggestions at the end of the paper are directed towards the achievement of these goals. The present work promotes international partnership in addressing and resolving global health preoccupations since research findings from one community/country can be mutualized in partnership with other communities and countries.

Keywords : cultural barriers, communication, health, breast cancer

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