

The Economic Burden of Breast Cancer on Women in Nigeria: Implication for Socio-Economic Development

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Abstract : Breast cancer which was more prevalent in Europe and America in the past is gradually being mirrored across the world today with greater economic burden on low and middle income countries (LMCs). Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women globally and current studies have shown that a woman dies with the diagnosis of breast cancer every thirteen minutes. The economic cost of breast cancer is overwhelming particularly for developing economies. While it causes billion of dollar in losses of national income, it pushes millions of people below poverty line. This study examined the economic burden of breast cancer on Nigerian women, its impacts on their standard of living and its effects on Nigeria's socio economic development. The study adopts a qualitative research approach using the in-depth interview technique to elicit valuable information from respondents with cancer experience from the Southern part of Nigeria. Respondents constituted women in their reproductive age (15-49 years) that have experienced and survived cancer and also those that are currently receiving treatment. Excerpts from the interviews revealed that the cost of treatment is one of the major factors contributing to the late presentation of breast cancer incidences among women as many of them could not afford to pay for their own treatment. The study also revealed that many women prefer to explore other options such as herbal treatments and spiritual consultations which is less expensive and affordable. The study therefore concludes that breast cancer diagnosis and treatment should be subsidized by the government in order to facilitate easy access and affordability thereby promoting early detection and reducing the economic burden of treatment on women.

Keywords : breast cancer, development, economic burden, women

Conference Title : ICERI 2015 : International Conference on Education, Research and Innovation

Conference Location : Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Dates : August 24-25, 2015