

# AWARENESS AND PRACTICE OF STUDENT NURSES ON BREAST SELF EXAMINATION: A RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR BREAST CANCER

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**Abstract:** Breast cancer is termed as the second most common cancer. Breast-self examination (BSE) is a risk assessment tool for early detection of breast cancer, though, its effectiveness is still controversial. However, it is important to spread its awareness since it is a risk-free, non-invasive and cost effective practice. It is important to educate women because awareness will enhance practice and help in the early detection and early treatment of breast cancer, one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in women. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in nursing department of the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. 191 clinical Nursing students were enrolled in the study within a period of three weeks. Majority of the participants (86%) reported to have heard about breast-self examination (BSE) while 14% claimed to have no knowledge of breast-self examination. Among the participants, 71% know that breast-self examination is done by individual to check for anomalies in the breast, 25% no had idea on who should perform the check while 4% reported to know that the breast-self examination is done by doctors. Participants were asked if they have ever performed breast-self examination, 64% answered “yes” while 36 answered “no”. But, 50% stated that perform it once in a while, 21% stated monthly, 14% stated weekly and 15% stated daily. When further asked at what time in the menstrual cycle they perform breast-self examination, 67% stated they perform at random, 13% stated a week after menstruation, 8% during and 12% before menstruation. Notwithstanding, some participants (47%) reported they cannot remember the last time they performed breast-self examination while 46% indicated recent regular practice of breast-self examination. Majority knew about BSE, but, not all that knew it know the accurate way it should be done nor practised it regularly. Majority of the student nurses got their information from the internet and social media. This negatively impacted on their practice of BSE. Therefore, since internet has taken large part of people’s lives, student nurses should be directed on the right databases to search for quality information; as this would greatly influence their practice.

**Key words:** Breast cancer, breast-self examination, awareness, risk factor.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

In recent times, cancer has been noted to be the most common cause of death globally. The global burden of breast cancer is expected to cross 2 million by the year 2030, with growing proportions from developing countries (Jemal, Bray, Melissa, Jacques, Elizabeth, & Forman, 2011). In 2012, report claimed that 8.2 million people died of cancer, and estimated prevalence of about 32.6 million people alive who had a cancer diagnosed in the previous five years (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2013). Among women, breast cancer is the most common cancer and a cause of mortality (WHO, 2008; WHO, 2013). Breast cancer is a global health issue and a leading cause of death among women internationally and it is responsible for about 12% of cancer related deaths throughout the world (Hossenli, Mahdavi & Pilevarzadeh, 2015). Incidence is highest in the developed countries, but, mortality is higher in less developed countries due to poor access to healthcare services (WHO, 2013).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Breast cancer is one of the diseases that can be managed if detected early (Chioma and Asuzu, 2007). In less developed countries, it is quite difficult to estimate the incidence of breast cancer, as cases are usually not reported and diagnosed; due to lack of access to treatment facilities. In Nigeria, healthcare service is out-of-pocket system. Hence, level of individual income determines level of healthcare services. Therefore, people tend to seek for alternative and traditional healers before consulting medical services; usually at the terminal stage of the disease (Mon and Than, 2009). Notwithstanding, early detection, diagnosis and treatment help to enhance chances for good prognosis. Thus, creating awareness of possible early warning signs of the disease is important. Breast-self examination (BSE) is a risk-free and painless procedure conducted with the objective of identifying breast related disorders and cancerous condition (Ameer,

Abdulie, Pal, Arebo & Kassa, 2017). Aside clinical examination and mammography, breast-self examination is a cost effective method for early detection of breast cancer (Ibnawadh, Alawad, Alharbi, Alduawihi, Alkowiter & Alsahy 2018). According to Segni, Tadesse, Amdemicheal & Demissie, (2016), more than 90% of breast cancer cases can be detected by women themselves through BSE. Moreso, Jenkins (2003), cited in Choima and Asuzu, (2007) reported that 70-80% of breast cancer cases are detected by patients themselves using breast self examination; through the detection of breast lumps.

The purpose of BSE is to learn the topography of the breast which will in turn allow one to notice changes in future in order to detect breast lumps or masses. BSE is carried out once monthly, between the 7th and 10th day of the menstrual cycle, go a long way in detecting breast cancer at an early stage of growth when there is low risk of spread, ensuring a better outcome when treated (Kayode, Akande and osagbemik, 2005). Nonetheless, a menopausal woman and male perform this procedure at a specific date on the month.

Despite the non-expensive nature of BSE, the morbidity and mortality associated with breast cancer, either undiagnosed or lately diagnosed is still on the increase. In Nigeria, breast cancer is responsible for about 16% of all cancer related death (Gabriel, Ajetunmobi, Shabi, Elegbede, Okere, Busari, ..... *et al*, 2016). The level of awareness and practice of BSE seem to vary from one place to another, despite the easy way of performing the procedure. In a study, 66% of the 200 research subjects were unaware of BSE, whereas, only 21% of those who participated know about the risk factors for breast cancer (Katkuri and Gorantla, 2018). In another study, 75% reported to have knowledge of BSE, 63% know how to perform the procedure, however, only 6% revealed that they do BSE on monthly basis and 44% never performed BSE (Haji-Mahmoodi, Montazeri, Jrvandi, Ebrahimi, Hghighat & Harirchi, 2002). Odusanya and Tayo (2001) conducted a study with practicing nurses and reported that most of the nurses have knowledge of breast cancer but lack its risk estimation. On the contrary, research showed that BSE education of students could positively affect their mother's knowledge of it. Therefore, nurses need to engage in health education regarding breast cancer and must be knowledgeable about breast cancer risk assessment and prevention. Thus, following the findings of Odusanya and Tayo (2001) and Abasi, Tahmasebi, Zafari, Tofigi, & Hasani, (2018), this study sought to assess the awareness and practice of BSE among undergraduate student nurses of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The findings of this study would help to strategize ways to improve practice. This is because student nurses are future practicing nurses who would enlighten and educate the public.

### **3. STUDY OBJECTIVE:**

- To determine the level of awareness of breast-self examination among nursing students.
- To assess the practice of breast-self examination among nursing students.

### **4. METHODOLOGY:**

#### **Study Design:**

A descriptive cross-sectional study.

#### **Study Area:**

Department of nursing, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.

#### **Study Participants:**

##### **Inclusion criteria:**

Nursing students in the clinical year (300 to 500 level students of the department of nursing, Ambrose Alli University).

##### **Exclusion criteria:**

Nursing students not in the clinical year (100 and 200 level students of the department of nursing, Ambrose Alli University).

##### **Sample size:**

210 students were randomly enrolled for the study, after consent was obtained and questionnaires distributed, but 191 questionnaires were retrieved.

##### **Instrument of Data Collection:**

Structured questionnaires were used for data collection. Information about their demographic characteristics (age, level of year in training, marital status), awareness of breast self examination and practice of breast self

examination were collected. Participants were made to choose from the given options provided and options of “yes” and “no” were also provided.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The validity of the study was determined using the content validity. While, the reliability ensured by means of the test retest method.

### **Ethical Approval**

Ethical approvals were obtained from the Head of Department of nursing and the Health Research and Ethics Committee, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma. Verbal consent was taken from the participants during data collection.

## **5. ANALYSIS:**

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## **6. RESULT:**

### **Demographics of the Participants**

Data from 191 participants were retrieved and analyzed. Majority of participants, 74% were between the ages of 21-25 years, 15% were between the ages of 16-20 years, 8% were between the ages of 26-30 and those above 30 years were 3%. Majority of the participants were single 91%, and 9% were married. Also, 96% were Christians while others were either Muslims or traditional worshippers. 40% were 300level, 34% were 400level and 26% were 500level students.

### **Awareness of Breast Self Examination**

Majority of the participant (86%) reported to have heard about BSE while 14% claimed to have no knowledge of BSE. Among the participants, 71% know that BSE is done by the individual to check for anomalies in the breast, 25% had no idea on who should perform the check while 4% reported to know that the BSE is done by the doctors. Furthermore, the participants were asked their source of information; majority of the participants (55%) reported of them reported to get information from social media and internet, 30% from lectures and 15% from healthcare professionals. In addition, when asked how often BSE should be done, 42% reported monthly, 17% reported weekly, 24% reported daily and 17% reported to have no idea on how often BSE should be done. However, when asked the appropriate time to perform BSE, 63% stated no particular time, 18% stated a week after menstruation, 8% stated during menstruation and 11% stated before menstruation. More so, 82% had good knowledge of what to look out for when performing BSE while 18% claimed to have no idea. 76% stated to know the techniques involved in BSE and 24% claimed to have no idea about how BSE is done.

### **Practice of Breast-self Examination**

Participants were asked if they have ever performed BSE, 64% answered “yes” while 36 answered “no”. But, 50% stated that perform it once in a while, 21% stated monthly 14% stated weekly and 15% stated daily. When further asked at what time in the menstrual cycle they perform BSE, 67% stated they perform at random, 13% stated a week after menstruation, 8% during and 12% before menstruation. Notwithstanding, some participants (47%) reported they cannot remember the last time they performed BSE while 46% indicated recent regular practice of BSE.

## **7. DISCUSSION:**

Breast cancer is termed as the second most common cancer. Breast-self examination is a risk assessment tool for early detection of breast cancer, though, its effectiveness is still controversial (Haji-Mahmoodi et al., 2002). However, it is important to spread its awareness since it is a risk-free, non-invasive and cost effective practice (Ibnawadh, Alawad, Alharbi, Alduawihi, Alkowiter & Alsahly 2018). It is important to educate women because awareness will enhance practice and help in the early detection, prevention and early treatment of breast cancer, one of the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in women (Veena, Kollipaka, Rekha, 2017; Siddherth, Gupta, Narang, & Singh, 2016).

Having analyzed the findings of this study, it was noted that majority of the participants are in the age group of 21-25 years. There is no significant difference between the age groups, but there is significant difference between the level of education and level of awareness of BSE. Those in the higher level, showed good knowledge and practice of BSE. In a previous study, majority of the participants were aged 21-30 and the awareness level was poor due to low level of education and exposure (Katkuri and Gorantla, 2018). Furthermore, it was revealed that majority participants in this study claimed their source of information was internet and social media. Can we say free internet access for student is good? Many universities around the world restrict the access to internet and social media within their premises.

They claim the restriction will help students stay focus on their study. Internet use was reported to have negative impact on student's academic performance (Owusu-Acheaw and Larson, 2015; Asemah and Okpanachi, 2013). More so, a study claimed that for young people who are used to fast stream of internet life, the truth may appear to be excessively dull and they can have difficulty in restoring what they have read and they tend to hold on to the false impression in their mind (East 2016). However critics argued that it will deny the students the opportunity to access useful materials they would need (Kolan and Dzandza, 2018). In addition, studies opined that internet aid access to knowledge, help students socialize, exchange quick information and find out related issues about their studies (Talaue, AlSaad, AlRushaidan, AlHugail, & AlFahhad, 2018; Talaue, 2018; Social Media by Students, 2017). In addition, others claimed they knew about BSE through lectures and healthcare personnel. This indicates that among the undergraduate nurses who claim knowledge about BSE, their understanding of BSE is good.

Notwithstanding, a good number of them (86%) claimed to have knowledge of BSE, there is discrepancy in the ways the procedure is done. Only 42% knew it is done monthly and 18% knew the accurate time it should be done. This is less than the findings in a previous study done in Nigeria, where 40% of the participants knew the accurate time interval in relation to the menstrual cycle when it should be done (Odusanya and Tayo, 2001). However, a study done in the USA showed that 77% of university nursing students correctly identified the recommended time for BSE. This could be use to ease access to authentic academic material in the university database as oppose to limited access in our setting.

Furthermore, questions on their practice were asked. Although 86% claimed to have heard of BSE, it was found that 64% agreed to have performed BSE, but, only 21% does it monthly and 13% does it accurately a week after their menstruation. More so, Only 28% confessed to practice it regularly. This is in line with previous studies (Katkuri and Gorantla, 2018; Haji-Mahmoodi, Montazeri, Jrvandi, Ebrahimi, Hghighat & Harirchi, 2002). Notwithstanding, reasons for the irregular practice was asked. Some claim it is due to fear of detecting anomaly, some said it is due to forgetfulness while the majority claimed no reason. Consequently, it was found that those that knew about BSE during lectures and from healthcare personnel practiced regular BSE. Therefore, emphasis should be made on classroom teaching as this has proved to have great impact on the students. It was also, proved that those that got their information from the internet either did not practice it or did not do it accurately. This could be related to the fact the internet and social media, except academic journal or databases, are not always right source of information. Hence, student nurses should be encouraged on the right databases to search for information. This is because they are the future nurses and the right information they have now would determine their practice, the quality of care and advice they will give to their patients.

## 8. CONCLUSION:

Breast cancer has been considered to be one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in women. Breast-self examination is a risk-free, cost effective tool use to detect breast cancer and other anomaly in the breast. Not just a head-knowledge, a regular practice would effectively help in the detection, prevention and early management of the dreadful breast cancer. This study proved that having the right information from the right source would adequately equip student nurses for their future practice. Majority of the student nurses got their information from the internet and social media. This negatively impacted on their practice of BSE. Therefore, since internet has taken large part of people's lives, student nurses should be directed on the right databases to search for quality information; as this would greatly influence their practice.

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