

Breast Cancer

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One in eight women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime (National Breast Cancer Foundation, 2024). Unfortunately, that makes it seemingly impossible to have a family or friend who is or will not be affected by breast cancer. As breast cancer is one of the leading forms of cancer afflicting hundreds of thousands each year, with many leading to death, many women and men can still fight and survive this deadly disease through early detection and advancing treatment.

Statement of the Problem

Breast cancer is a disease of the breast tissue that can progress to systemic involvement if not treated in time. Breast cancer can begin as an atypical or abnormal appearance area and then progresses to more aggressive cancer. Should this occur, the cancer would then become invasive and progress into lymph nodes and systemic circulation. As the breast cells change, this leads to an outgrowth and spread of cancer cells within the breast and becomes attached to the chest wall and overlying skin. The ability to spread along with prognosis is determined by classification (Lippincott,2023). Breast cancer can metastasize to the lungs, bones, mediastinal lymph nodes, liver, brain, and skin. Breast cancer can happen in both genders and is not exclusive to just one. “In 2024, it's estimated that 310,720 women and 2,800 men will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer” (National Breast Cancer Foundation, 2024). Just that statistic alone shows the drastic difference in cases between genders, but ultimately it shows that no matter the gender, anyone can still be affected by breast cancer.

Some of the symptoms reported for malignant breast cancer are a non-tender lump which is often found in the upper outer side of the breast, nipple discharge that is clear or blood-tinged,

nipple retraction, and asymmetry of the breast causing the affected breast to be elevated (Lippincott,2023).

If breast cancer is left untreated it could have a devastating effect on our nursing community. If this cancer is detected early, much of the treatment is shorter in duration and less invasive, thereby reducing the in-patient or even out-patient needs of the nursing community. When treatment is not started until late in the stage(s), the patient will require more intensive care, which will place a bigger burden on both doctors and nurses.

Risk Reduction/Treatment of the Problem

There are ways to aid in the prevention of breast cancer. Some risk factors that could prevent the cancer development are; sedentary lifestyle, postmenopausal obesity, and radiation exposure (Lippincott, 2023). Unfortunately, many risk factors are non-modifiable such as early or last menses, family history of breast cancer especially first degree, maternal relatives such as your mother, sister, grandmother, or aunt, advanced age, nulliparous, or first pregnancy after age thirty (Lippincott, 2023). Based on the fact that non-modifiable factors outweigh the modifiable ones, there are a few ways to prevent breast cancer or identify it as soon as possible.

Additional ways to prevent or identify breast cancer is to perform a breast self-exam. This can be done in the comfort of your own home. To perform a breast self-examination, many do this after a shower since they are already exposed. You first want to observe what the breast looks like in the mirror, place your hands on your hips, and look for asymmetry. Next, you want to raise your arms and assess for any changes. Then you want to lie down and feel the breast. You will want to use the opposite hand as the breast that you are examining. When feeling the breast, you will want to have firm pressure and move your hand in a circular motion starting

from the nipple and ending on the outer edge of the breast (M. Boraas & S. Gupta, 2023). This self-exam is a way to feel each breast for any unfamiliar lumps or bumps. If a lump is felt, the doctor should be contacted right away to further investigate the finding. Once your doctor is alerted one of the screening exams that will be done is a mammogram. A mammogram is a first-line test that looks at the breast tissue through an X-ray machine. This includes two plates, one on top and the other on the bottom of the breast. Mammograms can detect breast cancer as early as three years before it can be felt (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). With a mammogram, you should get them annually at the age of forty to fifty-five, ages fifty-five to seventy-four can be switched to biennial if no significant history as we know that the risk increases with age (Mackey, 2021).

Treatment for breast cancer can be overwhelming. It not only affects you physically, but emotionally as well. Treatment ultimately is based on what stage of breast cancer you have. Stages range from one to four, the higher the staging indicates that the cancer has spread more (American Cancer Society, 2024). One treatment for early stages particularly when the tumor is less than five centimeters is a breast-conserving surgery which is also known as a lumpectomy, or partial/segmental mastectomy (Pilgrim & Holle, 2024). A breast-conserving surgery preserves the majority of the breast tissue while ensuring clear margins. This is a standard procedure for early stages while attempting to preserve as much of the breast as possible. On the other hand, in later stages of breast cancer and patients with large tumors, and who test positive for the BRCA 1 or 2 gene mutation, the treatment and surgical side of it may look a little different. These patients would have a mastectomy performed, which is the entire breast being removed. There are different types of mastectomies which could include the removal of axillary lymph nodes and chest wall muscles. Another surgery that is often done either immediately after a mastectomy or

possibly delayed is reconstructive surgery. Reconstructive surgery can look very different for each patient because it ultimately is patient-dependent. Some may include tissue expanders or breast implants. (Pilgrim & Holle, 2024). Reconstructive surgery isn't always required but mostly it's done to improve physical and psychosocial aspects of losing breast due to breast cancer. In addition to surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation may be done to ensure the cancer is gone. This specifically is case and stage-dependent.

One positive lifestyle choice that could help prevent breast cancer is limiting the modifiable risk factors. Reducing obesity, as well as reducing a high-fat diet will improve overall health but it also lessens your risk for developing breast cancer. Limiting alcohol will also lessen your risk for breast cancer and many other health issues that come with the intake of alcohol. Another important lifestyle choice to make is being aware of your body and what is changing. Perform your breast self-exam every 6 months, know your body so when something is off you realize it quickly and address it quickly.

Planning of Teaching Content

Community outreach and education are important with significant diagnoses such as breast cancer. One way to reach the community with education regarding health is to host the health fair in Lewes Library. Within the health fair our group will utilize a table that is decorated with pink, which is widely known to represent breast cancer. On one side of the table, we will have a poster with education points on it as a visual. On the other side, we will have an interactive game for guests to participate in. Formally known as "Plinko" from the game show, The Price is Right, there will be a Plinko game board with sections and questions on the bottom that guests will have the opportunity to answer. These questions will be related to; when to start screening (mammograms) for breast cancer, what are factors that increase your risk for

developing breast cancer, and how often should you perform a breast self-exam. Knowing those answers will serve the community in early detection. Once the question is answered correctly the guest will receive a small prize such as a pen, bracelet, or keychain. Another activity is to honor anyone who has survived, is in remission, or has sadly passed away. In hopes of honoring these members of the community, there will be ribbons for guests to write names, or simply just words of encouragement. The ribbons will be tied to the string hanging on the front of the table for all to see. In addition, there will be an ongoing slide show of pictures of family, friends, and community members who have been impacted by this disease. Community events/resources will be intermixed within the slideshow such as Delaware Breast Center Coalition, Dewey Goes Pink, and many other resources and events that shed light on what the community has to offer. To ensure guests have the information to take with them, pamphlets will be included with all important information regarding what breast cancer is, screening, prevention, and treatment.

Conclusion

With breast cancer being the leading cancer worldwide, it's important to know the main things to ensure prevention is the top priority. As stated before, early detection and advancing treatment will ultimately have the greatest impact on survival. Breast self-exam specifically on changes such as asymmetry, nipple retraction, or nipple discharge. Mammograms should be done annually or biannually depending on age as they are the gold standard for screening. As far as treatment is concerned surgery is the main treatment. Surgery could look very different for each person. Lastly, breast cancer is a diagnosis that affects the physical and mental aspects of the patient. Making the patient feel "normal" when their entire world is changing is an important aspect of caring for these patients.

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