

Breast Cancer

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Did you know that breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women in the United States? This type of cancer occurs in the breasts, being significantly more common unilaterally, but may also occur bilaterally. There are many different types of breast cancer. They can be classified as carcinomas or adenocarcinomas. Breast cancer may often metastasize to other parts of the body through the lymph nodes or the bloodstream (American Cancer Society, 2021) Due to breast cancer being the most common type of cancer among women. In understanding breast cancer, it is significant to understand the different risk factors, types, stages, preventative measures, and treatment options for this disease.

Statement of the Problem

Breast cancer is a type of cancer that is very prevalent around the world. For example, “Breast cancer is currently one of the most prevalently diagnosed cancers and the 5th cause of cancer-related deaths with an estimated number of 2.3 million new cases worldwide” (Lukasiewicz et al, 2021). There are many risk factors associated with breast cancer. Those risk factors are modifiable and non-modifiable. Many of the non-modifiable risk factors include being a female, being an older adult, having a family history of breast cancer, having genetic mutations, and reproductive history. Women are more likely to have breast cancer. Females have an increased hormonal stimulation which makes them more at risk. Also, the types of breast cells factor as a significant role in breast cancer due to the hormone stimulation. (Lukasiewicz et al., 2021). That would be considered a non-modifiable risk factor. Several genetic mutations are associated with breast cancer. It is expressed by Lukasiewicz that different genes primarily affect breast cancer. Notably being the BRCA1 gene and the BRCA2 gene (Lukasiewicz et al., 2021). It is important to note, if you have these genes or have had a family history of breast cancer, that you be proactive about getting screened. Even though there are some factors that are uncontrollable. There are still modifiable risk factors that can be addressed, to help you reduce your risk of developing breast cancer.

There are many modifiable risk factors for breast cancer. They include certain medications and supplements, activity level, body mass index, alcohol intake, smoking, or exposure to chemicals. Understanding medications you may have taken, is very important when dealing with breast cancer because “Numerous research indicates that females who use hormonal replacement therapy (HRT) especially longer than 5 or 7 years are also at increased risk of breast cancer” (Lukasiewicz et al.,2021). This is an important supplement to be aware of, because if you can get off a hormonal replacement therapy it can help to lower your chances of developing breast cancer. Issues such as being overweight and having a sedentary lifestyle can be modified. Staying active and eating a healthy balanced diet, can help to prevent the development of breast cancer. Along with the different risk factors, there are also different types of breast cancer.

Non-invasive breast cancer is a type of cancer that has been seen to be more common, it is called ductal carcinoma in situ. DCIS is a non-invasive type of breast cancer, that is typically seen coming out of a duct that is in the breast. Generally, this type of cancer will not spread to other parts of the body. If left untreated, this type of cell could turn into an invasive tumor. It is more commonly seen as non-invasive (Cuthrell & Tzenois, 2023). While there are some non-invasive breast cancers, there is always a risk for mastectomy.

An invasive type of breast cancer is called an infiltrating breast tumor. This tumor can spread throughout the breast stoma and other areas surrounding the breast stoma. This type of cancer can metastasize throughout the whole body. Turning into aggressive cells, which can lead to invasive ductal carcinoma or invasive lobular carcinoma (Cuthrell & Tzenois, 2023). We must understand what invasive and non-invasive breast cancers are because, “In 2024, an estimated 310,720 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women in the U.S as well as 56,500 new cases of non-invasive breast cancer” (New ACS report, 2024). Roughly a 4% increase of cases from 2023. These are alarming numbers associated with diagnosed breast cancer. So, making sure we are keeping ourselves aware and educated of what to look for. Can help to reduce this number of cases.

With all the different types of breast cancer. There are also stages involved with breast cancer. Staging breast cancer has to do with how much the cancer cells are spreading throughout the breast tissue. There are 4 main stages of breast cancer. Stage one, the tumor would be the earliest stage including carcinoma in situ. Stage two, the tumor is going to be very localized within the breast tissue. Stage three is going to show the localized tumor within breast, begin to advance into other tissues. Stage four is going to include late locally advanced tissue. Including how the tumor cells have metastasized to other parts of the body (Cuthrell & Tzenois, 2023). Understanding how far you are with staging will help in the treatment plan for breast cancer. If left untreated, breast cancers will affect our nursing community. Patients will be left with extensive issues. These issues include surgeries, treatments, potential health related issues, and deaths. We must understand different screening preventions as well as treatment options to better care for the patient population.

Risk Reduction/Treatment of the Problem

While breast cancer rates are growing throughout the world due to increased risk factors. There are still options available to help reduce the risk of breast cancer. Breast cancer starts with prevention. There are many ways we can try to prevent it. Some ways we can prevent breast cancer include changing our eating habits, and making sure we are keeping up with an active healthy lifestyle. Another good way to prevent breast cancer, is to avoid things that can cause cancer. Smoking can always increase your risk of developing cancer. So, cutting smoking out of your daily habits will be beneficial. Also making sure to avoid alcohol is another way to help prevent the development of breast cancer (Breast Cancer Prevention, 2025). Making simple changes to your everyday life can help you down the road in not developing this type of cancer. Along with prevention, there are also different screening methods available to detect breast cancer. Screenings are important for a woman to get routinely due to their higher risk factor of developing breast cancer.

The average age for a woman to begin getting screenings for breast cancer is 40 years old. One of the most common screening methods is a mammogram. This is the main screening option for women in

this age group. Women who are not showing any signs of cancer during their screenings are not required to have a screening annually. Women at higher risk will have a guideline to have a mammogram annually (Ren et al., 2022). If a woman has a history of breast cancer, it may also be recommended to have an MRI with her mammogram for additional screenings (Cancer Screening Guidelines, 2023). If a tumor appears after the screenings, finding an appropriate treatment option is crucial.

There are many treatment options available for breast cancer. One of the most common treatment options is chemotherapy. It has been shown that completing upfront chemotherapy early has many different advantages. The most significant one being the increased chance of breast conservation therapy. Starting this type of chemotherapy early also increases the chance of finishing chemotherapy. Chemotherapy may also vary the regimen based on the tumor's pathology (Menon et al. 2024). Along with doing chemotherapy, surgical treatment is also an option. Some of these surgical treatments include a breast-conserving surgery called a lumpectomy. Which is going to remove the cancerous area, as well as surrounding tissue. A mastectomy is another treatment option which is the removal of the entire breast. This technique will remove all the cancer and the breast tissue (Monen et al., 2024). Making sure you are completing treatments is very important to help prevent the spread of cancer. This research is important in understanding and dealing with patient care, because cancers are very patient specific in treatment. Having a good support system when being diagnosed with breast cancer is very important. Also, trusting in all your healthcare professionals is vital. Finally, having complete support in all decisions regarding your care is very important when going through the cancer treatment process.

Teaching

Teaching all about breast cancer will make people more aware of what to look out for with this type of cancer. Two important pieces of information I want the learner to remember about breast cancer are the importance of getting a mammogram to help prevent or diagnose and treat breast cancer early. The learner also being able to remember big risk factors for breast cancer is huge in the prevention aspect of breast cancer. Teaching strategies I feel would be helpful to understand this information would include

explaining the different types of risk factors with breast cancer, and things they can reduce doing to prevent this disease. I also believe a video of what a mammogram does, and what it shows would be very helpful in understanding how it relates and can diagnose breast cancer. Some teaching tools I think will help to relay this information could include a trifold board all about breast cancer, including what it is, staging, and the different types of breast cancer. I also think handing out a pamphlet with different risk factors and ways you can prevent breast cancer would be good to hand out, so they can refer to it as needed. I also think using teach-back as a method to test understanding of breast cancer can be very beneficial to learning about this disease.

Conclusion

Cancer is a huge risk factor with females in the world. There are so many different risk factors, causes, stages, types, screening methods, and treatment options, and understanding these different elements is crucial when dealing with breast cancer. This information is very prevalent in evidence-based learning. It helps to understand how various therapies can help to treat cancer, different screening options available, and ways breast cancer can be prevented. The importance of writing this paper was to educate on what breast cancer is, understand the background of breast cancer, how it is individualized to every person, and to educate on ways to prevent and treat breast cancer.

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