

**Title:**

Knowledge of Breast Cancer and the Practice of Breast Self-Examination Among Female Student Nurses

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**Abstract Summary:**

There is to date a deficit in the knowledge and practice of breast self-examination (BSE) especially in developing countries. Knowledge on breast cancer and practice of BSE among student nurses was assessed in this study. Barriers to effective BSE practice have been identified and recommendations have been made.

**Learning Activity:**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
The learner will be able to explain the need to intensify education on breast cancer and breast self-examination in developing countries.	The practice of breast self examination even among undergraduate nursing students is still low as the findings from the study indicates.
The learner will be able to discuss the cultural diversities in understanding and practicing breast self-examination as a measure for early detection of breast cancer.	Ghana as a developing country does not as yet have measures in place for mandatory annual health checks of citizens. women still report late with symptoms of breast cancer.

**Abstract Text:**

**Background:** Breast cancer is currently the most prevalent cancer diagnosed in women both in developing and developed countries. In 2012, women diagnosed with breast cancer were 1.7 million. There were 6.3 million breast cancer survivors who had been diagnosed in the previous five years. It is the second leading cause of death in women worldwide.

In developing countries including Ghana, it has been noted that breast cancer tends to occur a decade earlier so there is an increase in the incidence of breast cancer among young women.

It has been noted that, gains in survival might be achieved if women report early with changes in the breast. Breast self-examination (BSE) is a screening procedure that is reported to make women more "breast aware" and may lead to early diagnosis of breast cancer.

This study assessed the knowledge of breast cancer and the practice of breast self-examination among female student nurses in a public university in Ghana.

**Method:** It was a descriptive cross-sectional study that drew a sample of 180 female student nurses from the School of Nursing in the university using a random sampling method. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18.0 was used to analyze the data and was presented in descriptive statistics. An author designed questionnaire was used to collect the data. It had four sections that gathered biographic data, knowledge breast cancer and breast self-examination, practice of breast self-examination and beliefs about breast cancer.

**Findings:** The findings showed that 171 students (95%) knew that breast cancer is a malignant tumor of the breast. They also knew the clinical presentations of breast cancer. Majority of students also knew that breast cancer could be familial (92.2%) and 59.4% agreed to the public perception that putting money under the breast in brassieres can cause breast cancer. On breast self-examination, only 48.3% of the respondents agreed that BSE is done monthly. The rest indicated that is practiced daily (11.1%), weekly (6.7%), anytime (25%) among other responses. Majority of the respondents (96.7%) knew the right procedure for conducting BSE and 66.7% indicated that they practice BSE. Only 25% of the respondents practice BSE monthly. The majority (56.9%) practice it whenever they remember. For those who do not practice, 25% indicated that they do not practice BSE because they do not know how to perform it. Among others, factors identified as barriers to the practice of BSE included the fact that it is not effective in diagnosing breast cancer (29.9%) and it is time consuming (12.3%).

The study concluded that, student nurses have adequate knowledge on breast cancer and BSE. However, if even these university nursing students still have a challenge with practicing BSE, there is still the need for intensifying education on the need for BSE among the general populace. It was recommended that women should make time for monthly BSE and that the Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Service should also intensify their efforts at educating women on breast cancer. Non-Governmental Organizations involved in breast cancer awareness programmes should target their education also to the major universities and other learning institutions.