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Linguistics and cultural barriers to the effective communication of breast cancer in Sub-Saharan Africa

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This research aims at verifying the effectiveness of reaching target populations while paying attention to their linguistic and cultural background when communicating new knowledge, ideas or technology in a multicultural world. Our case study is an experiment on the communication of knowledge on breast cancer in three sub-Saharan countries (Ghana, Tchad and Cameroon health). The methodology consisted of submitting a semi structured questionnaire to local populations in some localities in these target countries in order to determine the cultural barriers hindering the effective communication of knowledge on breast cancer. Once this done, sensitization documents on breast cancer were translated into Ewe (Ghana), Mbaye (Tchad), Ghomala', Ewondo and Ffulde in Cameroon. In the Ghomala' locality, a sensitization programme using Theatre for Development was organised for different target groups depending on the variables in test. For one of the groups, the cultural barriers discovered were taken into consideration while communicating during the programme whereas in the other groups, they were not. Another questionnaire was disseminated after three months to verify the level of appropriation of those who attended the campaign based on Chumbow's appropriation theory. This research therefore discusses some linguistics barriers, spiritual beliefs, representations and practices in the target African communities hindering effective communication of issues on breast cancer in the target localities. The present work promotes international partnership in addressing and resolving global communication preoccupations since research findings from one community/country can be mutualized in partnership with other communities and countries.

Key words: Linguistics barriers, cultural barriers, communication, health, breast cancer

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