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## Knowledge and early detection measures among nuns in Anambra State Nigeria towards breast cancer

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**Background:** Breast cancer is a malignant tumor of the breast cells. This study investigated the knowledge and early detection measures of nuns in Anambra State, Nigeria towards breast cancer.

**Methods:** Three research questions were raised to guide the study. Health belief model was adopted for the study. Cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used for the study. Power Analysis was used to draw a sample of 324 nuns from an estimated population of 794 of them living in communities located in Anambra State, Nigeria through stratified, proportionate convenient sampling techniques. Data were collected by administration of a set of seventeen-items self-developed questionnaire on knowledge of breast cancer and measures for the disease early detection. Data collection was through personal contact and direct instrument administration to the respondents with the assistance of three trained preceptors during the respondents' regional general meetings. Data were analyzed, descriptively using frequencies and percentages. Unpaired t-test was used to compare the responses of the two groups.

**Results:** Only 61 (18.8%) of the nuns described breast cancer as uncontrolled multiplication of breast tissue. There was no significant difference ( $p>0.05$ ) in the conception of breast cancer among the two groups of nuns. As many as 137 (42.3%) respondents, expressed that breast examination is a test to detect early signs of breast cancer, and 31 (9.6%), were not aware of breast examination. There is no significant difference ( $p>0.5$ ) in what the two groups understand as breast examination. Eighty-eight (27.2%) of the nuns would do it once in a month but at any time they feel like doing such; 52 (16.0%) of them do it within the first week after menstrual period; and 50 (15.4%) had never done breast self-examination. The two groups showed no significant difference ( $p>0.5$ ).

**Conclusion:** This study has shown that the nuns in Anambra State have poor knowledge about breast cancer and the early detection measures. It is therefore imperative that realistic and adequate awareness be created and the sisters educated through aggressive education campaign programs so as to eliminate misconceptions relating to the topic. During the training programs, emphasis should be laid on early warning signs, significance of a painless lump, and correction of misconceptions. The information should be disseminated through appropriate means to the elderly reverend sisters who may not be able to attend the general programs, such as taping, videoing and relaying same to them at their convenient time and homes.

**Recommendation:** Each religious congregation should establish policy guidelines aimed at promoting adequate and urgent dissemination of all relevant information concerning breast cancer; and, integrate breast cancer screening procedures into their curriculum for basic education of formatees programs. There should be free access to screening services in the government health institutions during the pink month of October designated for breast cancer screening, utilizing clinical breast examination and mammography. Similar studies should be conducted using a larger sample which should include all age groups.

**Biography:** Madu, Laurette Philomena Nkem, a State Registered Nurse and Midwife, who major in Nursing Education (1st degree), completed her M.Sc. Nursing in July, 2014 and had earlier completed her M.Ed. and Ph.D (Educational Administration & Supervision) in 2004 and 2010 respectively. Headed School of Nursing Ihiala for 15yrs after some years of Clinical Nursing and teaching. She served in Our Lady of Lourdes Governing Board for 15 years and made outstanding contributions. Sister is highly interested in research work and will appreciate assistance in this direction.

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