

30th World Congress on

ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE

September 04-06, 2017 | Edinburgh, Scotland

Breast cancer risk and screening among sexual minority women and heterosexual women in Taiwan: A preliminary result

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Background/Objectives: Lesbians were found to have higher risk of getting breast cancer and lower utilization rates of breast cancer screenings in Western countries. This study aims to exam the differences between lesbians and heterosexual women in Taiwan on objective breast cancer risk calculations using the Gail model. Health risk behaviours and screening behaviours for breast cancer were also examined within the two groups of women.

Methods: An online cross-sectional survey was used to collect data. A total of 495 Taiwanese women were recruited between December 2016 and May 2017, including 317 sexual minority women (mean age 28.64 years old, SD=6.618) and 178 heterosexual women (mean age 36.33 years old, SD=10.811).

Results: There were no significant differences on estimates of 5-year and lifetime breast cancer risk factors between sexual minority women and heterosexual women in Taiwan. However, the sexual minority women were found to have higher rates of current drinking, smoking and using breast bindings while the heterosexual women had higher rates of pregnancy, children, breastfeed, miscarriages, abortion and use of birth control pills. Regarding breast cancer screenings, the sexual minority women were found to be less likely to have a mammogram, to have the screening regularly and to plan having a mammogram in the future, when compared to the heterosexual women.

Discussion/Implications for nursing: Healthcare providers should understand differences of breast cancer risk factors and utilizations and intentions of mammogram among sexual minority women and heterosexual women in Taiwan, and therefore, provide culturally competent care to women with varied sexual orientation.

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