Breast health in developing countries.

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Abstract

Abstract Breast cancer is one of the leading cancers world-wide. While the incidence in developing countries is lower than in developed countries, the mortality is much higher. Of the estimated 1 600 000 new cases of breast cancer globally in 2012, 794 000 were in the more developed world compared to 883 000 in the less developed world; however, there were 198 000 deaths in the more developed world compared to 324 000 in the less developed world (data from Globocan 2012, IARC). Survival from breast cancer depends on two main factors - early detection and optimal treatment. In developing countries, women present with late stages of disease. The barriers to early detection are physical, such as geographical isolation, financial as well as psychosocial, including lack of education, belief in traditional medicine and lack of autonomous decision-making in the male-dominated societies that prevail in the developing world. There are virtually no population-based breast cancer screening programs in developing countries. However, before any screening program can be implemented, there must be facilities to treat the cancers that are detected. Inadequate access to optimal treatment of breast cancer remains a problem. Lack of specialist manpower, facilities and anticancer drugs contribute to the suboptimal care that a woman with breast cancer in a low-income country receives. International groups such as the Breast Health Global Initiative were set up to develop economically feasible, clinical practice guidelines for breast cancer management to improve breast health outcomes in countries with limited resources.

KEYWORDS:
ACCESS TO TREATMENT; BREAST CANCER; DEVELOPING COUNTRIES