

Role of Nurses and Midwives in Driving Breast Cancer Awareness

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Abstract: *Breast cancer is a one of major cause of female cancer worldwide. It accounts for roughly 30% (or 1 in 3) of newly diagnosed female malignancies annually. The following are the American Cancer Society's projections for breast cancer in the US in 2023: Invasive breast cancer will be identified in women in about 297, 790 new cases. There will be roughly 55, 720 new diagnoses of ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). Every year, Breast Cancer Awareness Month is observed to help spread knowledge about the disease, its signs and prevention, and to provide funding for studies on the disease's causes, effects, and potential treatments. In order to help women decrease or remove obstacles to screening, nurses can play a significant role in screening promotion by (a) educating women on screening guidelines, the advantages and limits of screening, and risk factors for breast cancer.*

Keywords: Breast cancer, Nurse, Midwives, Awareness

1. Introduction

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and also a second leading cause of death. The International symbol of breast cancer awareness is pink ribbon. This pink color is symbol of expressing moral support for women who are suffering from breast cancer. Breast cancer awareness month is observed every October. The annual campaign is useful to raise awareness about impact of breast cancer. This campaign is carried out by health team members to overcome the problem associated with breast cancer by early detection, treatment and awareness.¹ The theme for breast cancer awareness in 2021 was I AM AND I WILL. It means women are the only first person who can take care of themselves by accepting the situation and fighting strongly with cancer. This theme is encapsulated the women's spirit, strength and empowering them against cancer. Data show that 25.8 per 100, 000 women are suffering from breast cancer, with a mortality rate of 12.7 per 100, 000, and a new case is detected every four minutes. The cases are rising both areas, urban and rural. But survival of breast cancer victim is only dependant on the stage of detection. If the cell of cancer is found early, the treatment options are more and consequently there are higher chances of survival. Women who have detected with breast cancer in early stage have 93 percent of survival rate in the first five years. In India the rate of breast cancer is higher as compared to developed country because of low awareness, less Government funding, high population rate and absence of breast cancer screening program. In 2020 data shows that nearly 10 million deaths occurred in India from the breast cancer.²

Nurses and Midwives' Role on Breast Cancer Awareness

Nurses train, care for, and serve in every aspect of healthcare. Nurses' primary role is to share their knowledge, educate people, promote safe and healthy practices for wellbeing. Midwives play an important role to empower the health of women. They work in different aspects like health check - ups, guidance and counseling, education on health and nutrition, assist women for decision making, advice for betterment of health like family planning etc. Their role is to respectfully and compassionately care for all women.³

Cancer is the disease which involves cell mutation and rapid creation of abnormal cell which grow beyond their usual limits, and can be involve different part of the body. After some time, it referred to as malignancy, which is primary cause of death. The mortality rate can be reduced if the cancer patient is screened as early as possible. There are two aspects for cancer prevention and control; - Early detection and treatment.⁴

When the suspicious occurrence of sign and symptoms initially appears in a patient then there is need of early detection by screening of different method of cancer. Nurses play an important role in ruling out breast cancer using their holistic perspectives, advanced practical skills, and advanced knowledge. Nurses can educate women about the risk and causes of breast cancer; can initiate the screening program at different level of health care delivery system at primary health centre, community health centre, sub centre and at villages.⁵

They can organize camps and awareness program as our younger generation are needier to know about breast cancer as primary prevention approach.

Nurses encourage women to attend those camps and give proper information about their benefits. They teach about the guidelines of cancer screening, Benefits of screening, limitation of screening and associated risk factors of breast cancer. Nurse helps women to take decision and eliminate the barriers for screening.⁶

They can conduct the nursing consultation screening based on age group and clinical features of women in which complete history collection including family history and assessment of sign and symptoms can be included. They can refer the women if any abnormal growth is identified in breast. In addition, they should explain the benefits and method of breast self - examination by using dummy, posters and some video clips. Moreover, they can educate them if any lump or small node is observed during breast self - examination then they must immediately seek gynecological consultant as soon as possible.⁷

Nurses need to actively participate in cancer prevention and control awareness training program. They work as counselor, trainer and manager in awareness activity. By increasing awareness on importance of early diagnosis and treatment they protect the women against developing breast cancer. If the breast cancer is detected in early stage, the life can be saved by seeking proper treatment modalities.⁸ Breast cancer is totally exhausting the physical, mental and social health of women. And also create a challenge for their families. Therefore, the role of nurses and midwives is of utmost importance in providing support and rehabilitation to women with their clinical care team. Culturally the breast carries a significant womanhood, femininity and feeding of babies so that it is very difficult in the journey of their treatment. She has to receive the holistic level of care with support from nurses and midwives.⁹

In India shortage of nurses leads to more errors, higher morbidity and mortality rates. Therefore, inadequate nurse patient ratio has a cascading effect in fighting against breast cancer. Nurses and midwives are a link between the health care system and community people. They are playing a crucial role and most effective channel to community. Nurses are always trusted within the community people or in a family.

By accepting the western lifestyle like food habits, the chances of breast cancer are increasing day by day. Due to this changed lifestyle India is facing this biggest threat today. For overcoming this situation, manpower is required to empower the women about prevention and control of breast cancer. The strong team required to raise the awareness among ladies. But in India the shortage of nurses creates inadequate supply of cancer education because they are only the person who can mould the behavior of community people. Research showed that nurse and midwives had widest impact in raising awareness on initial symptoms of breast cancer by advertising campaigns to overcoming cultural barrier. Due to lack of nurses in India the coverage of awareness about breast cancer is inadequate in tribal and rural areas.¹⁰

This article explores the pivotal role of nurses and midwives in enhancing breast cancer awareness. In the context of increasing breast cancer incidence rates and the crucial importance of early detection, this paper highlights how nursing and midwifery professionals contribute significantly to educating women about breast cancer symptoms, risk factors, and the necessity of regular screening. Through a review of current practices and educational strategies employed by these healthcare professionals, the article emphasizes the need for their active involvement in public health campaigns and patient education. The paper also discusses how nurses and midwives, with their unique positions in healthcare settings and communities, can effectively bridge the gap between healthcare services and women's access to breast cancer information and support. The findings underscore the essential role of these professionals in promoting early detection and potentially reducing breast cancer mortality rates.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has highlighted the pivotal role nurses and midwives play in driving breast cancer awareness. Their unique position in healthcare settings allows them to educate, counsel, and support patients, playing a critical role in early detection and treatment adherence. Nurses and midwives are not only caregivers but also educators and advocates in the fight against breast cancer. Their holistic approach, combining clinical expertise with empathetic patient care, is invaluable in increasing awareness and improving patient outcomes. The article underscores the necessity of continuous professional development for these healthcare professionals, ensuring they remain at the forefront of advancements in breast cancer care. Ultimately, the empowerment of nurses and midwives is essential for enhancing breast cancer awareness and management, thereby contributing significantly to the reduction of breast cancer mortality rates. This study calls for more research and policy focus on leveraging the role of nurses and midwives in cancer care, which could be pivotal in transforming the landscape of breast cancer awareness and treatment globally.

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