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The Burden of Breast Cancer in Jamaica

Background: Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in Jamaica. Compared to women globally, Jamaican women have a more aggressive disease - earlier age of onset, more advanced stage at presentation and higher mortality. Low survival rates in developing countries have been linked to lack of early detection and inadequate diagnostic and treatment options. The main objective of this practicum was to analyze the mortality trends of breast cancer in Jamaica between 2010-2014.

Methods: The Registrar General's Department (RGD), responsible for registering all deaths across Jamaica, was contacted to retrieve all registered primary breast cancer deaths between 2010-2014. The stratified data by gender and age was used to calculate annual cause-specific, age-standardized mortality rates per 100,000, and annual percent change (APC) for women with breast cancer. The age-standardized rate (ASR) was calculated using the Jamaica annual census population data between 2010-2014 from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and the World Health Organization's (WHO) World Standard Population (2000-2025).

Results: There were 1,635 breast cancer deaths in Jamaica between 2010-2014 based on data collected from RGD. There was an increase in the mortality ASR throughout the five-year period. In 2010, the mortality ASR was 21.8/100,000 compared to 28/100,000 in 2014. The APC was calculated for each age group with increases seen in all groups except the 25-34 age group. Over the five-year period, the most significant increase in mortality was observed in the 35-44 age group (APC=94.5%).

Conclusions: Breast cancer in Jamaica remains a major economic burden. There has been an upward trend in breast cancer mortality across women in Jamaica. Early prevention, diagnosis and improvement in treatment options are all essential to reducing the breast cancer burden among women in Jamaica.

