Barriers to Mammography for Gaza Women

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Background

- Breast cancer is the leading cause of death of women living in Gaza
- One of the most densely populated cities in the world with a population of 1.4 million living on total area of 360 sq km
- Majority of women in Gaza do not receive adequate screening for breast cancer
Background

- Five year survival rate from breast cancer is very low 30-40% or even lower
- Out of 100 Gaza women diagnosed each year with breast cancer, only 35 will survive
- 60% of women received diagnosis of breast cancer after metastasis is evident
- Without intervention, Gaza women will continue to die from a disease which all over the world is seeing increasingly high survival rates
In Gaza-only three mammography units serve a population of around 1,400,000 people; two of these are in private centers
Barriers and opportunities for breast cancer screening in Gaza

- Objectives:
  1- Identify barriers to early detection and treatment of breast cancer
  2- Develop comprehensive educational and interventional program targeting women and their healthcare givers
  3- Measure the impact of intervention

Ultimately- A seed for national screening program
In other words..
Four Stages

• **Stage 1:** surveys to identify barriers and attitudes toward mammography and breast cancer for Gaza women and their health caregivers

• **Stage 2:** educational programs for local women and health care givers

• **Stage 3:** training local healthcare givers

• **Stage 4:** measurement of the impact of education and intervention
First stage - Barriers for women

- Methods:
  - Surveys for women older than 35 years
  1. Women living inside Gaza
  2. Gaza women living outside Gaza
  3. Control group of Palestinian women in Israel (Arab Israeli) and Jerusalem
Perceptions of breast cancer among Arab Israeli women

- Incidence of breast cancer is increasing - few Arab women over age 50 take advantage of free mammography
- Role of Arab woman in society expressed as marrying, having children and being totally committed to her family
- Women perceived the chain of events that begins with screening for breast cancer as possibly resulting in breast cancer will lead to an inability to fulfill female roles

Baron-Epel O 2004, University of Haifa Women’s Health
Results

• Total of 212 surveys from 10 countries
• 100 surveys from women inside Gaza, average age of 45
• 56 surveys from Gazan women living outside Gaza and Israel, average age 45
• 56 surveys of Palestinian women living in Jerusalem and Israel (Arab Israeli), average age of 44
Mammography-Attitude

- Diagnostic
- Screening
- Had a mammogram

Inside
Outside
Others
Religion, traditions, and cultural barriers

Inside
Outside
Others

- Religion
- Traditions
- Encouragement
Financial, resources and access barriers

Inside

Outside

Others

- Financial
- Resources
- Access
Misconceptions

- May cause cancer
- Uncommon cancer
- Maybe contagious

### Bar Chart

- **Inside**
  - May cause cancer: 60
  - Uncommon cancer: 55
  - Maybe contagious: 10

- **Outside**
  - May cause cancer: 40
  - Uncommon cancer: 25
  - Maybe contagious: 15

- **Others**
  - May cause cancer: 30
  - Uncommon cancer: 20
  - Maybe contagious: 5
Priority, Lowering Risk, Research
Conclusion

- Cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic barriers exist to screening mammography for Gaza women
- Misconceptions about breast cancer and mammography are encountered more among women inside Gaza
- Any program to improve screening rates for women in Gaza must address both structural and cultural barriers
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Questions or comments?

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Thank you