

Where Practice of mammography has been reported, it has been very low.^[19,26,27] Generally this finding indicates that presence of knowledge and positive opinions towards preventive strategies should not be interpreted as readiness to practice secondary preventive strategies.

The commonest reason reported for not practicing any of the preventive procedures was the 'feeling that one cannot get breast cancer', followed by 'lack of awareness and forgetfulness' then 'avoidance of fear and anxiety'. Similar reasons were also given in a previous studies study.^[28,29] Specifically 'the feeling that one cannot get breast cancer' indicates disbelief and superstition. Disbelief and misconception about breast cancer has been reported as contributory factor to late reporting.^[30]

A very strong association seems to exist between knowledge and practice of early detection strategies. Even though not all who knew about the preventive strategies practiced it, there is a very strong indication that practice increases as level of knowledge increases. Another very strong association between the knowledge of breast cancer risk factors and practice of preventive strategies was observed. Knowledge of the risk factors seems to be motivational to practice, probably because it helps people to estimate to what extent they are vulnerable. Previous studies have also identified relationship between knowledge and practice of preventive procedures.^[16]

Conclusively, the study shows that there is good level of awareness of breast cancer among the respondents. However this level of awareness was not consistent in all issues related to breast cancer. Moreover a comparatively small but substantial number remain ignorant of breast cancer issues. While tendency for positive attitude toward preventive practice could be said to be high, there still exist some superstitious beliefs and ignorance that could hinder good practice among some.

While there is a strong relationship between knowledge and practice, it seems that Knowledge would not always translate to practice in all cases. The need for a more focused cancer education is obvious.

Study limitation

One limitation of this study was that the women of reproductive age included were only those attending immunisation clinics within the period of the study; hence their experience may not fully reflect what may be obtainable in the general population.

Relationship between knowledge and practice

General knowledge and practice of early detection strategies was extremely significant ($\chi^2 = 1.556$, $df = 9$, $P = 0.001$)

Knowledge of risk factors and practice of early detection strategies was also extremely significant ($\chi^2 = 63.3$, $df = 6$, $P = 0.001$)

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How to cite this article: Azubuikwe SO, Okwuokei SO. Knowledge, attitude and practices of women towards breast cancer in Benin City, Nigeria. *Ann Med Health Sci Res* 2013;3:155-60.

Source of Support: Nil. **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.