

Breast cancer in sub-Saharan Africa: The current state and uncertain future

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Abstract

Breast cancer is the commonest cause of global cancer-related deaths in women and a public health burden in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Although the disease incidence in SSA seems lower, mortality rates are disproportionately high in comparison to high-income countries. The global disease burden is growing, with SSA reporting the majority of cases; however, the dearth of information results in insufficient data which is barely representative of the actual disease burden in this population. Future incidence predictions assign the subregion with a majority of the cases and associated deaths. Breast cancer presents with racial and ethnic variations, and available evidence suggests geographical diversity and persistent risk factors that have barely been explored in SSA. Breast cancer is a complex genetic disease, but the genetic risk factors in the extant African population, which is the most genetically diverse population, is scant and of low quality. This review focuses on the burden, prevalence, detection, treatment, survival, biology, as well as risk factors, and reinforces the need for breast cancer-associated risk factor investigation and population-specific studies in SSA.