KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF BREAST CANCER SCREENING AMONG WOMEN AGED 20-45 WORKING IN KENYATIA MARKET, NAIROBI, KENYA.

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ABSTRACT
Breast cancer screening comprises methods used to examine for the presence of breast cancer in the absence of symptoms. Breast cancer screening is deemed important as early detection of breast cancer has been associated with better prognosis of the disease. Late diagnosis of patients at advanced stages, when little or no benefit can be derived from therapy, is the hallmark of breast cancer in Kenyan women. Recent global cancer statistics indicate rising global incidence of breast cancer and the increase is occurring at a faster rate in populations of the developing countries that until recently had low incidence of the disease. A recent survey carried out by Ipsos synovate in six provinces in Kenya states that six out of seven women in Kenya have not practiced breast cancer screening. Concerned by this prevailing situation and with recent data suggesting that breast cancer screening may be influenced by knowledge of the screening methods and attitude towards them, this cross sectional study was designed to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of breast cancer screening among women working in Kenyatta market.

The data was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to elicit socio demographic information and knowledge, attitude and practices of these women towards breast cancer screening. The questions were both open and closed ended. A total of 280 women were enlisted in the study, but only 271 respondents completed the questionnaires. They were administered personally and only those who agreed to participate filled the questionnaires. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0.

All the respondents had some form of formal education with most 190 (69.8%), having obtained secondary or higher education. Two hundred and twenty four (82.6%) respondents were aged between 20-35 years old.

Most (77.8%) of the women were knowledgeable about breast cancer stating that it is the most common cancer in women. One hundred and ninety eight respondents (73%) were able to correctly identify the early presentation of breast cancer as a painless breast lump. They also stated that BSE is useful in early diagnosis and that early diagnosis improves outcome of treatment. However most of the respondents (54%) did not know that breast cancer can be inherited

More than a quarter of the respondents mentioned family and friends as their main source of health information (23.8%).

Over ten percent were able to correctly identify cigarette smoking, obesity and hormonal contraceptives to contribute to cancer of the breast.

Majority (92.1) of the respondents were willing to go for breast cancer screening if given the opportunity. Most (96.8%) of them stating that it is important as it helps in early diagnosis and leads to improved outcome of treatment. However, more than half (52.4%) of the respondents do not practice breast cancer screening.

In conclusion, the study revealed satisfactory knowledge of breast cancer but poor knowledge of screening methods and low levels of breast cancer screening practices among the women who participated. The women were willing to be screened but did not go for screening due to various
factors that included poor knowledge of screening methods, beliefs and time. There is the need to organize series of health education programs to enlighten the women about breast cancer screening. This can be done by government agencies or NGOs. If properly executed, it may influence the attitude of women in Kenyatta market and improve practice. The duration was 13 weeks and the budget was approximately 10,500 shillings.