

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Breast Cancer

Last time we focused on cervical cancer.

We learned how dangerous it is and that over 2,600 women in Malawi develop cervical cancer and more than 1,600 die from the disease every year.

This week, we look at another type of cancer that affects women: breast cancer.

Here again, very few women have undergone screening for breast cancer in Malawi.

According to the Malawi Medical Journal, the most common cancer in females in the country is cervical cancer (36.6%), followed by bladder cancer (6.8%) and breast cancer (6.7%).

Therefore, it is critical that women have information about breast cancer.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To encourage listeners about the benefits of breast cancer screening
- To discuss about the signs and symptoms of breast cancer
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about breast cancer
- To give the participating journalists story ideas on breast cancer

The Problem: Breast Cancer

Breast cancer accounts for 8% of female cancers in Malawi, according to research findings by the Malawi Medical Journal.

It says breast cancer affects many young and middle-aged Malawian women.

Breast cancer is a kind of cancer that develops from breast cells.

The breast, just like any other part of the body, consists of billions of cells. These cells multiply in an orderly fashion with new cells replacing the old ones that die.

When cancer is present, these cells multiply uncontrollably – creating too many cells. In fact, there are many more than there should be.

According to the American Cancer Society, cancer that begins in the milk duct is the most common type, while cancer that begins in the lobules of the breast is much less common.

It is important for women to get themselves screened for breast cancer, so that it can be detected early before spreading to the other parts of the body.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand the importance of screening for breast cancer and some of the causes of the disease.

Make the following points:

The first symptoms of breast cancer are usually an area of thickened tissue or a lump in the woman's breast.

The majority of lumps are not cancerous; however, it is advisable for women to get any lump in their breast checked by a doctor.

Some of the signs and symptoms are as follows:

A pain in the armpits or breast that does not seem to be related to a menstrual period, redness of the skin of the breast, a lump in the armpits and discharge from the nipples.

There are several causes of breast cancer, including: women who have a close relative

with the disease are more likely to develop breast cancer, it is further stated that alcohol consumption can put a woman at risk, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Women should go for breast cancer screening, regularly. It is not a difficult process, a mammogram is required to determine if a woman has breast cancer or not. Mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. It is given to women who have no signs or symptoms of breast problem.

The breast is pressed between 2 plates to flatten and spread the tissue. This may be uncomfortable, but it is necessary for an accurate mammogram. (American Cancer Society)

Do a voxpop with women and girls in your area to find out how many have ever gone for breast cancer screening.

Conduct an interview with a nurse from your area to talk about the process of screening and the benefits of having regular screenings.

Useful Contacts

- Sandra Mapemba -Population Reference Bureau-PRB- Contact person+265-99-921-9789
- Jean Mwalabu; Department of Reproductive Health: +265993210392
- <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancer/detailedguide/breast-cancer-diagnosis>

