



Healthy Women
Healthy Society

- Gynaecological Cancers in Sub Sahara Africa
- Gynaecological cancer treatment in Africa
- Fitness Measures for Good health
- Breast Cancer

Effects of GBV on women's general wellbeing

COVID-19 and Stigmatization

Vivian's Diary

Sail through our Margret's words of wisdom

December 2020



MawAuro

THE MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE



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Editor's Note

It is our pleasure to welcome all of our readers to *Healthy Women, Healthy Society Magazine*.

Healthy Women, Healthy Society is published by Foundation for Women's Health Promotion and Welfare Initiatives (FWHPWI), an NPO that identifies with the need for concerted efforts to finding preventive and curative remedies to cancer, especially gynaecological cancers. We identify with and promote dissemination of research and innovations about cancer in women, and we collaborate with multi-sectoral approaches and programs of community outreach campaigns and projects to champion cancer awareness in Africa. We also use information on healthy living and lifestyle to promote cancer awareness, particularly among most vulnerable populations.

Cancer is a growing global threat, hence, the need for anti-cancer projects and platforms focused on valuable cancer awareness ideas. *Healthy Women, Healthy Society* is indeed poised to be one of such cancer awareness platforms. Our objective is to bring up a special magazine for healthy lifestyle education and the dissemination of disease fighting information especially from, and for Sub-Sahara Africa.

We aim to provide an ideal forum for sharing information in various formats, (articles, stories, interviews) about cancers, (especially women cancers), and common diseases – their symptoms, risk factors, preventive measures and possible remedies. Articles on nutrition and healthy menus are quite welcome.

In this maiden issue, we bring to you a cocktail of information drawing on a spectrum of sources ranging from articles written by experienced professionals and practitioners to first-hand messages on how to 'sail through' breast cancer from the interview with a breast cancer survivor; to sizzling stories, updates and links, as well as tips on eating and living healthy to fight off causes and conditions that spread cancer in women.



Dr. Chimezie Nnadozie
Chief Editor

◆ Editorial Team

Dr. Gabriel Chimezie Nnadozie

Mrs Temilade Aruya

Dr. Mabuatsela Maphoru

Dr. Nneka Alaribe Nnadozie

◆ Design & Production

Dr. Gabriel Chimezie Nnadozie

◆ Distribution & Subscription

foundationforwomenshealth@gmail.com.

info@foundationforwomenshealth.com



'Healthy Women Healthy Society' Magazine
is published by

Foundation for Women's Health Promotion and Welfare Initiatives (FWHPWI),

Address/Office

1101 Zethuishof, 620 Park Street, Arcadia
Pretoria, South Africa

General enquiry

+27604301958; +27715512248

foundationforwomenshealth@gmail.com

WhatsApp +27746437236

<https://foundationforwomenshealth.com/>

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Gynaecological Cancers in sub-Saharan Africa

Dr. Nneka Alaribe Nnadozie



Image credit: Arab Hospital Magazine

Worldwide, more than 8.6 million women suffer and die largely from preventable and treatable cancers due to disparity to access treatments and outcomes. This situation is more pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) low and middle income countries (LMICs) where 61% of cases and 70% of death tolls were recorded.

Generally, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women. However, cervical cancer which is one of the five gynecological cancers, (cancers that start in a woman's reproductive system)¹, is another women cancer that is pulling weight in its prevalence and death toll. Cervical cancer is caused by the human papillomavirus, (HPV).

According to International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), about 570,000 women were diagnosed of cervical cancer and more than 310,000 died in 2018; equivalent to one woman dying every hundred seconds. With almost 90% of new cervical cancer cases and 92% of related deaths occurring in LMICs, the situation is really reaching epidemic proportions.²

Furthermore, in cancer association of South Africa (CANSA) 2020 fact sheet, cervical cancer is the second leading female cancer in South Africa. 12,983 new cases are diagnosed annually with more than 5,595 recorded deaths.³ Obviously, most of these deaths could be avoided if prevention measures, proper cancer screening and treatment were in place.

There is an imperative need to address women's cancers as a matter of priority and to scale-up effective diagnosis and treatment. However, untangling the causes for high cervical cancer burden in SSA is difficult due to a complex interplay of many

biological, organizational, economic, and socio- cultural factors.

Typical examples of these impeding complex inter-play factors include cases of comorbidity (of different infections and diseases) that contribute to increase in prevalence and death due to cervical cancer and other women cancers. For instance, according to Mapanga and his group in their systemic review work (2017), HIV has been correlated with an increased risk for developing cervical cancer. HIV infection makes the body become immunocompromised thereby becoming more susceptible to contracting HPV, which is a significant precursor to cervical cancer. Currently, the incidence of HIV/AIDS in SSA is very high, accounting for 71% of the global population living with HIV. And, young women bear a disproportionate HIV burden compared to their male peers.

Population growth and aging, limited access to medical facilities, poor nutrition and insufficient facilities for treatment are other contributing factors for high cervical cancer burden in SSA.

In a 2018 work, Johnson and colleagues stressed on the need to seek additional organizational support rather than using education alone. However, also in 2018, Eze and co from Delta State University Teaching Hospital (DELSUTH) Nigeria,

Adapt to the lifestyle Of the moment Use Your Face Mask & Stay Safe

A MESSAGE FROM
FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH PROMOTION AND WELFARE INITIATIVES



highlighted the importance of knowledge of screening practices that are easier to perform and cheaper, such as the VIA/VILI methods. They also pointed out that making provision for diversification of strategies that are used to improve implementation such as giving incentives will also improve uptake.

Additionally, the sexual post treatment of women cancer survivors is always taking for granted. These women sometimes are left as walking corpses suffering alone their inner scars and trauma encountered during the process of diagnosis and treatment of these various cancers. To this effect, in 2018, Pitcher and colleagues proposed the consideration of comprehensive sexuality post treatment measures especially in South Africa.⁴ These measures should include the socio-cultural context of these women with

interventions at multiple levels. These multiple intervention should be in form of widening sexual health training with the medical curriculum, cancer clinics development, broadening the scope of research relating to gynecological cancer and general women wellness. Furthermore, many studies have stressed on the expansion of radiotherapy capabilities, recommendation of Pap smear test and the importance of gene expression study to assess the risk of cervical cancer. These strategies could go a long way to reduce the burden of the disease in SSA.

The last but not the least is that studies have discovered that extracts of many plants would be important for new drugs and for future treatment of gynecological cancers.

For this and other related reasons, researchers are in serious search for alternatives and treatments with herbs and perhaps natural products which are quite promising for present and future therapeutic purposes for the gynecological cancers(5). Plant-derived molecules or drugs could be an effective alternative for the treatment of gynecological cancers and more studies at ethno-botanical, cellular and molecular evaluation levels are encouraged so as to identify other potential anticancer plants and possibility of integrating their uses along with clinical trials.

Hence the above numerated already existing and innovative strategies for the treatment of gynecological cancers in SSA strongly center on the general use of significant investments involving a broad

range of partners in comprehensive cancer control which are crucial to improving the quality of life of women affected by cancer while at the same time strengthening national health systems.

Author: Franca Nneka Alaribe Nnadozie holds a doctoral degree in Biomedical sciences, specialized in Cellular and Molecular bases of Pathology Differentiation in Cancer and Degenerative Diseases. She has been involved in many research works in biomedical sciences and community activities with numerous publications. She is passionate about reducing diseases using native flora to unravel their therapeutic capabilities through research, awareness campaign/education and bringing scientific knowledge closer to the community.

She is founder and director of Foundation for Women's Health Promotion and Welfare Initiatives (FWHPWI), an NPO fighting to eradicate Women's Cancers and osteoporosis In Sub-Sahara Africa using organised early detection campaign, education and research.



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2

Some medicinal plant extracts in Gynaecological cancer treatment in Africa

Dr. Helen Fotouo

Cancer is one of the most challenging diseases to cure. There have been significant diagnostic and therapeutic advancements over the last decade. However, the drawback with cytotoxic drugs or chemotherapy used to destroy tumor and arrest disease progression is that they maybe be too toxic to normal cells, hence, causing critical issues to healthy tissues). Herbal medicine with lesser or no side effect is currently considered as an alternative cancer treatment. A wide variety of plants have been explored for their anti-cancer properties. The following are some of the plants that have been tested for gynaecological cancers, (Cervical, Ovarian, Vaginal, Vulva and Womb also known as uterine or endometrial cancer).



Image credit: ugm.ac.id/

Garlic (Allium sativum), has been proven to reduce risk of breast and womb cancer. Its antitumor characteristics is attribute to

the compounds allicin, which is a proliferation inhibitor of malignant human cells.¹



Image credit: ascent-therapies.co.uk

Turmeric (Curcuma longa) is from the Zingiberaceae family. Its edible part is the bright yellow dried rhizomes. It's one of the famous Indian spice. The study of cytotoxic properties of turmeric shows an inhibition of telomerase activity on cancer cells. Curcumin, one of the important ingredients of turmeric, has been found to play a significant role in the prevention and

treatment of primary ovarian cancer.

The anticancer potential of curcumin against cancers, including breast, uterus and ovarian cancer have been supported in many studies.² It has been shown to significantly reduce genetic damage caused by radioactive iodine; and also to induce apoptosis and inhibits proliferation of cancer cells.

Commonly known as, *Ginger*, this is another plant of same family with Tumeric. Ginger has also been suggested to have anticancer effect and, it has been shown to inhibit the growth of Cervical cancer cells.³



Image credit: treehugger.com

A preliminary study demonstrates that extracts of Vernonia species, and edible plant commonly known in West Africa as *Bitter leaves*, have antitumor activities against cancer cells.



Image credit: sustainabledi.com

The study shows cytotoxic and apoptotic effects of the Vernonia species on OVCAR-3 cells, providing scientific evidence that this plant species may have an anticancer potential against ovarian cancer. Its anti-

cancer activity has been attributed to phenolic acids and other compounds such as vernoid and vernomydin.⁴

Black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), is used as both food and medicinal plants in many parts of the world. Its leaves have been suggested to have anticancer effects.



Image credit: agweek.com

Solanine, solasodine found in leaf extracts of this plant showed significant antioxidant and antitumor cytostatic properties and was found to inhibit the growth of cervical carcinoma cells.⁵ Aqueous extract of the leaves

has also been reported to be effective in suppressing endometrial cancer cells via the autophagic pathway and enhance the cytotoxicity of docetaxel in human endometrial cancer cells.⁶

Artemisia: The genus Artemisia consist of about 500 species, occurring throughout the world.



Image credit: independent.co.ug/

Artemisinin and its derivatives are the most known and important component of the genus with multiple biological activity. Some species such as *A. absinthium*, *A. princeps* and *A. annua* have exhibited anti-cancer effects including cervical cancer.⁷

In a nutshell, there is scientific evidence supporting the anticancer effects of the these mentioned plants. Therefore, including these plants in our daily diet may boost our

immune system and increase its ability to resist the development of cancer cells.



Author: Dr Helen Fotoua, holds a master degree in Ecology and a PhD in Horticultural Science. Her research interest includes Agroecology, Post-harvest Technology nutraceutical and functional foods. She loves bringing scientific knowledge closer to the community.



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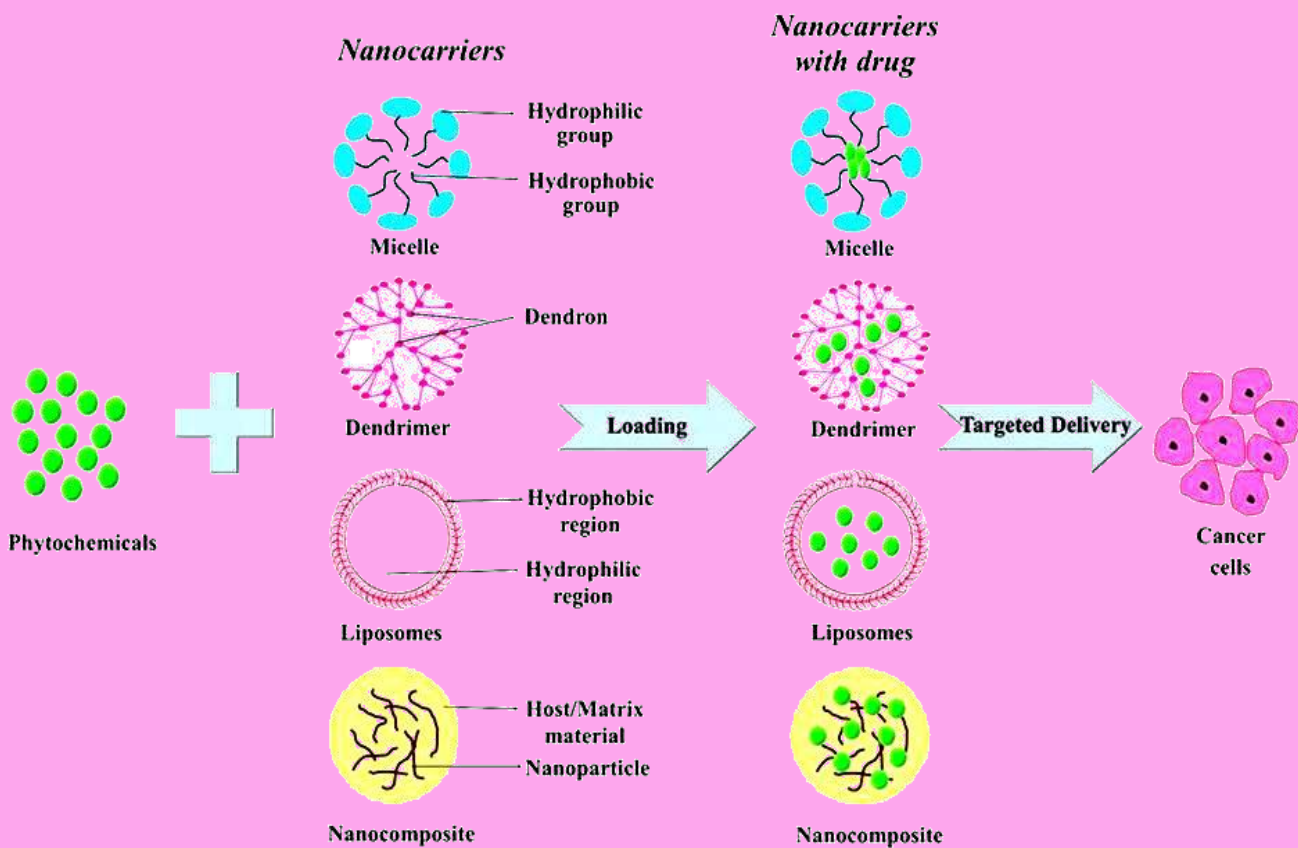
Natural Products Based Nanodrugs that can aid cancer treatment

Dr. Mabuatsela Maphoru

In cancer treatment, one of the challenges that are often encountered with natural products or any other conventional drugs is that the drug undergoes chemical changes before it even reaches the targeted destination. Now, research in nanomedicine is focussing on the use of nano-based drug delivery systems, where the drug (natural products or any conventional drug) is mounted on a nano-carrier that preserves the drug until it reaches its destination.

Cancer can be treated by radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Radiotherapy use radiation to kill the cancer cells while chemotherapy make use of conventional drugs that kill cancer cells through various mechanisms.¹ However, some of the problems that are associated with this treatment is multidrug resistance by damaged cells, severe side effects, elongated treatment period and drug toxicity.² All these effects make it difficult for cancer patients to manage their health. To circumvent these problems, natural products are undergoing clinical

testing as cancer treatment alternatives. Some of the problems that are often encountered with the use of natural products are their low absorption capacity, therefore requiring that the drug be administered in high doses for it to achieve the expected efficiency.³ One of the challenges that are often encountered with natural products or any other conventional drugs is that the drug undergo chemical changes before it even reaches the targeted destination.



Synthesis of natural products based nanodrugs. Image credit to 4.

The nanocarrier, which is of high importance, is responsible for preserving the drug until it reaches its destination. Some of these systems are designed to release and dose the drug slowly, which helps in improving the efficiency of the drug and of having to take the drugs repeatedly.⁵ This suggests that nanomedicine is the future of drug discovery.

There are many different types of the nanocarriers that can be used for this purpose. The list includes liposomes, polymer nano-

particles, solid nanoparticles, etc.⁶ Their selection is based on their chemical, physical properties and their applications. Some of these nanocarriers are shown in the diagram next page.

It is very important to note that the activity of the nanodrug also depends on the shape and size of the nanoparticles.⁶ The nanoparticle will be used to target specific bio-surfaces (or cancer cells) and deliver a drug in a controlled manner.



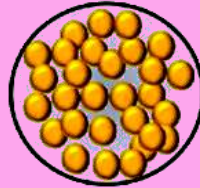
Liposomes

- 1. Increase Oral Bioavailability



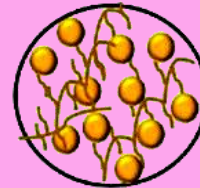
Polymer nanoparticle

- 1. Biocompatible
- 2. Suitable for oral delivery



Solid nanoparticle

- 1. Enhanced shelf life
- 2. Enhanced stability



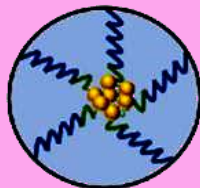
Polymer conjugates

- 1. Control and sustain release formulation



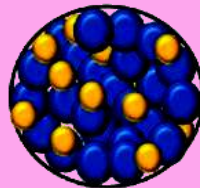
Magnetic nanoparticle

- 1. High targeting capability



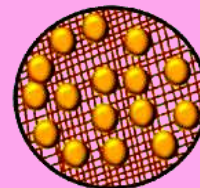
Polymer micelle

- 1. Easy to prepare
- 1. Cost effective



Hydrogel

- 1. High drug payload
- 2. Muco-adhesive properties



Implantable nanofibre

- 1. Long-lasting release profile

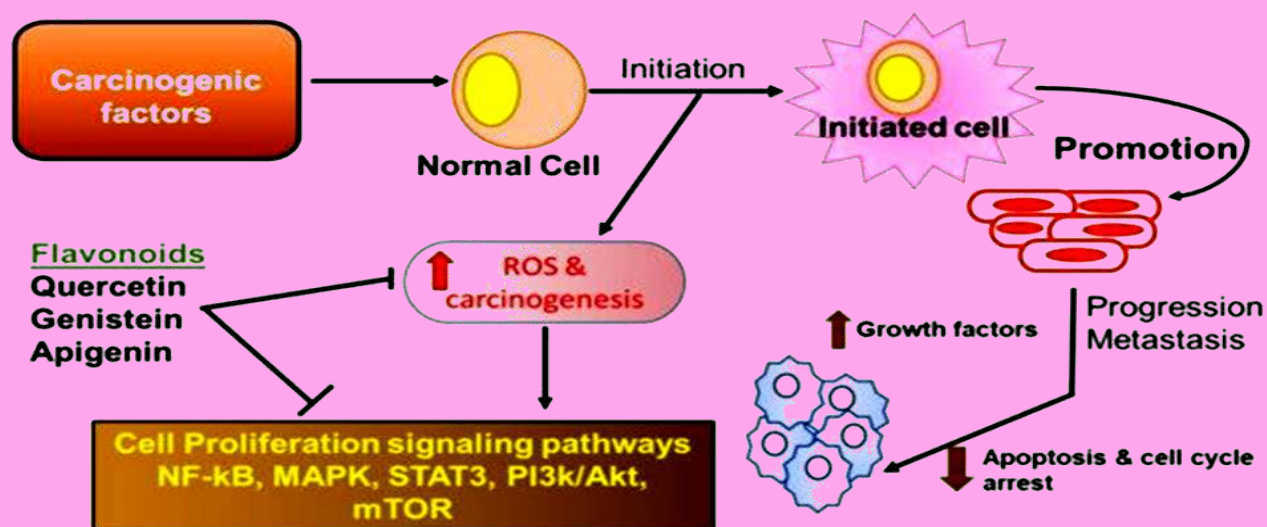
Nanodrugs made of the same drug with different nanocarriers. Image credit ⁶

Natural products of nano-based drugs have novel physicochemical properties and pharmacokinetics that surpass that of the independent natural product. They reduce the toxicity of drugs, manipulate multiple action mechanisms, permeate thorough biological barriers, increase efficacy, minimise dose, offer good site targeting abilities, controlled and site selective drug release. The important qualities of the nano-based drugs is their low toxicity, biodegradability and biocompatibility.^{5,7}

Due to their low toxicity, it is assumed that cancer patients will be able to undergo treatment with reduced side effects since the active drug is a natural product. Some of these drugs are currently undergoing clinical testing as potential treatment drugs

for cancer. This article is based on common phytochemical flavanoid based drugs. Flavonoids, such as curcumin, quercetin, genistein, apigenin and naringenin, are known to have different kinds of medicinal properties, in which anticancer is one of them.⁸ The diagram above shows how the flavo-noids can act as anticancer factors. They have an ability to inhibit tumor initiation and tumor promotion as shown in the diagram.⁹ To overcome the shortcomings of some of the natural products in cancer treatment, the natural products are used in combination with nanocarriers to achieve satisfactory results.

Curcumin, quercetin, genistein, apigenin and naringenin are flavonoid that are extracted from different plant species. Example,



Mechanism involved in the treatment of cancer cells by flavonoids. Image credit ¹⁰

curcumin is extracted from the dried rhizome of *curcuma longa* (turmeric) while quercetin is extracted from *Sophora Japonica*, onions, grapes, berries, cherries, broccoli, and citrus fruits. ¹⁰

There are countless number of reports that show that nanodrugs based on these flavonoids have promising anti-cancer properties for various types of cancers such as breast, blood, pancreatic, lung, prostate, liver, breast, colon, cervical, bone and others.

Author: Dr Mabuatsela Maphoru holds a doctorate degree in chemistry. She is a lecturer and researcher in nanotechnology and catalysis at the Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa. Dr Maphoru is also involved in many community engagement activities.



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The single most significant risk for developing breast cancer is 'being' a woman. So as a woman (young or old), understanding your body and awareness of ways breast cancer develops, progresses and is treated is vital.

But men should read this article too, because learning about the condition helps you provide the vital support to a relative or friend if that becomes necessary.

HOW DOES ONE GET BREAST CANCER?



One of the critical breast cancer misconception to address is how BC happens. Is it the result of an infection or poisoning?

We believe Breast Cancer begins from a mixed number of ways that are not yet fully understood. Scientists recognize the place of a particular gene type and your family history as significant factors.

A family history means that someone else in your family has the condition - increasing the risk that you may also have it.

In some of these cases, there are unique genes in your family tree (BRCA1/BRCA2) which cause you to develop the disease after they pass these genes to you. But in truth, inheriting the risk of breast cancer only makes up 5-10% of all cases of breast cancer. In the majority of cases, women with breast cancer DO NOT have a family history.

There are *environmental factors* which further increase the risk. This means factors that surround you, which can influence changes (known as mutations) in your breast tissue.

Smoking, being overweight, certain drugs, exposure to radiation or chemicals, alcohol are some possible examples scientists are still researching may have an impact on developing breast cancer by causing 'chronic inflammation' in the body.

We appreciate now that chronic inflammation in breast tissue could be what leads to the cells starting to mutate (grow abnormally) and resulting in breast cancer. But what causes the inflammation in the first place may be the way your genes mix with the environmental factors.

HOW COMMON IS BREAST CANCER?

Worldwide, breast cancer is the most commonly occurring type of cancer among women.

It also causes the largest number of deaths due to cancer in women.

Breast cancer is still a disease more likely to happen in developed (higher-income) countries - BUT, the rates in lower/middle income countries is growing.

Many women seem to believe that breast cancer is only a disease for middle-aged and older women. Let's clarify this misconception. Yes, it is true that after your gender, age is the next

most significant risk for breast cancer. But younger women can get breast cancer.

In 2017, a US study showed about 4 women with invasive breast cancers out of every hundred women under age 40 compared to 20 breast cancer cases out of hundred for women in their 50s. (United States). Nearly 30 out of every 100 women in the age group 60-69 years have invasive breast cancer.

CAN BREAST CANCER BE CURED?

To cure cancer - that is, eradicate the disease in such a way that it stops growing and never returns is still outside our reach - for now.

A popular but worrying breast cancer misconception that we see is a promise of breast cancer *cure*.

Most often, the cure is attributed to: Herbal supplements/preparations, Antioxidant food sources, Traditional 'treatments'

claiming to offer a cure but without scientific evidence.

It's easy to fall prey to claims of cure when one is desperately worried about your health or that of a loved one's. But at present, the best evidence we have is to detect breast cancer early *and* start treatments promptly.

The main treatments we have are surgery (removal of part or all of the breasts/both breasts) or chemotherapy (taking particular drugs which suppress the growth of cancer) or radiation therapy. Newer treatments like Immunotherapy are also being studied for their effectiveness.

Treatment may mean using one or a combination of these methods. However, what determines the treatment choice?

Well, its a combination of several things:

- The extent of cancer, meaning (the size, stage, and grade of cancer, as well as its location).
- The type of cancer, whether or



not responsive to hormones; or linked to inherited gene abnormalities:BRCA1/ RCA2.

- The age of the woman
- The woman’s choice/prefeence
- Other health conditions present
- What is available to you (your local area and your resources)

WHY DOES BREAST CANCER COME BACK AFTER TREATMENT?

There is another misconception about breast cancer.

And it is that when you treat 'early' breast cancer, that's it.

(Early breast cancer means cancer involving the breast and tissues close by such as the lymph

nodes under the arm beside the breast.)

Breast Cancer can come back in the breast or chest area where the original cancer was found.

It can also return in a distant area, meaning it comes back in another part of the body, such as the bone, liver, or lungs.

The facts are that while the risk of breast cancer coming back is greatest in the first 2 to 5 years following diagnosis, later recurrences can happen.

Even at 20 years after diagnosis, people with low stage breast cancer have a 15–20% chance of recurrence - Breastcancer.org.

Conclusion

Dealing with cancer involves a combination of different measures - adequate health awareness is essential to combat harmful breast cancer misconceptions. Having the right information helps you make the right decisions. Don't forget the main lifestyle choices that may reduce one's risk of Breast Cancer:

- maintaining a healthy weight
- eating nutritious food
- exercising regularly
- limiting alcohol
- never smoking

Author - Dr Sylvia Kama-Kieghe

This article was originally published on

[AskAwayHealth](https://www.askawayhealth.org/)

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5

Fitness as One of the Measures for Good Health

Dr. Debbie Kupolati

Physical fitness is a person's state of health and wellbeing. The term fitness is generally used to describe the ability to perform physical activities such as sports, occupational duties and day to day undertakings.

However, fitness connotes much more than physical health, but also, emotional and mental health. Physical fitness is achieved through good nutrition, physical exercise (either moderate or rigorous), and enough rest. The basic components of physical fitness include heart and lung endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body composition. Maintaining a good level of physical fitness is a thing that everyone should aspire to achieve.

In this article, I will be discussing the ways in which **body composition** influences your level of fitness. Your body composition is the relative amounts of muscle, bone, water, and fat in your body. It is largely determined by your eating habit and level of physical activity.

The body composition can be used to determine a person's fatness and to predict the risk for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart diseases, hypertension obesity and certain cancers. It can also reveal sarcopenia, a situation of muscle

loss which is associated with impaired physical functioning. You must know the status of your body composition from time to time to ensure an optimal level of fitness. Some of the benefits you will derive from knowing your body composition are:

Tracking changes in your body composition over time

With repeated measures, your body composition comprising skeletal muscle mass, fat mass, body water and mineral content is revealed. The information will help you to know if it is going in a positive or negative direction. For example, if you are desirous of dropping unwanted weight. You want to be sure to drop fat mass without losing the skeletal muscle mass. If your previous measurement indicated the skeletal muscle mass to be 21kg and fat mass to be 16kg, while the present analysis shows the skeletal muscle mass to be 18.2kg and the fat mass to be 15kg, this is an indication of a negative direction. This situation will negatively impact your fitness. With appropriate dietary and fitness intervention, you will be able to adjust to a positive direction; to consistently drop the fat mass while preventing or minimizing losses in the skeletal muscle mass.

Building your skeletal muscle mass

If you are working at building your muscle mass, appropriate dietary and fitness regimen is required to achieve the results of weight gain in the form of muscle mass and not fat mass. Your understanding of your starting point and your target is necessary to establish a realistic timeline for tracking progress. This also will enable your dietitian to advice on the dietary interventions to optimize the desired result and to monitor the progress as earlier discussed. The use of supplemental protein may help enhance muscle building. However, an adequate balance with healthy, diverse diets will help in achieving the desired result. It is very vital to ensure the gain in weight is a positive one. This will only be revealed by knowing your body composition.

Maintaining a steady basal metabolic rate

The basal metabolic rate (BMR) is the calories your body needs to perform its most basic life-sustaining functions. When your skeletal muscle mass increases, your basal metabolic rate increases. Your body's capacity to utilize energy increases, therefore your ability to burn fat and drop the unwanted weight increases. Knowing your BMR can help in establishing a proper nutrition plan based on your unique calorie need as revealed from your body composition analysis. Understanding your BMR,

your usual activity level, and the number of calories you need daily to maintain your weight are important for you to optimise your physical health and fitness.

Achieving effective weight loss

You will be helped to differentiate between muscle loss and fat loss or both if you accompany your weight loss endeavour with tracking your body composition. Relying on BMI to track changes in body composition has limitations because of its inability to identify if losses are due to fat loss, lean mass loss or both. People often believe that low-calorie diets facilitate weight loss. However, the concern with the use of low-calorie diets in weight loss is the high risk of muscle mass loss. This is a negative outcome in weight loss and implies health risk and functional impairment (physical fitness). The accurate analysis of your body composition during your weight loss regimen will enable you to track where weight loss is coming from either negatively or positively. The body composition results are usually presented in a visual representation showing the balance between muscle and fat; showing overall health risk. This revelation can help you to set effective weight loss goals toward ensuring desirable progress. A gradual reduction in the fat mass with a corresponding increase in the skeletal muscle mass over time is characteristic of effective weight loss.

Tracking excess fat mass and preventing muscle loss in seniors

This situation is particularly important with senior adults; age 65 and above. At this age, the diets need to be coordinated to support muscle maintenance i.e. to minimise the risk of muscle loss which leads to frailty. Because this phase of life is often associated with reduced physical activity and poor dietary intake, there is an easy accumulation of excess fat mass with an associated increase in disease risk especially sarcopenia. This loss of muscle reduces physical functioning, increases the chance of visceral fat storage and may initiate the risk for diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. By tracking the body composition, effective nutrition programme can be planned to maximize muscle maintenance and reduce the risks of sarcopenia, feebleness and injury.

Preventing injury and inflammation in sports activities

If you are a sports person, knowing and tracking your body composition for changes in skeletal muscle and fat mass is vital to optimizing your fitness for performance and desired success. Understanding the specific needs for your sports activities will guide the dietary plans to support the maintenance and integrity of skeletal muscles. As a sports person, you don't want to

experience the imbalance of the skeletal muscle mass and fat mass which is detrimental to your fitness and performance.

Conclusion

Engage the necessary steps to safeguard your fitness; secure a healthy body that you desire. Don't wait to be suddenly diagnosed with a preventable non-communicable disease. Be in control of your body composition towards minimising your risk and optimising your fitness.

Author: Debbie Kupolati holds a Doctoral degree in Nutrition with a specialty in Nutrition Education. She is a Registered Nutritionist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. Debbie is passionate about reducing diseases risk through nutrition assessment, nutrition campaign, nutrition education/counseling, and research. She has been involved with many community nutrition projects and workplace wellness with the aim of improving people's health through the dissemination of her research findings at the various platforms, she has made significant contributions to the body of knowledge in nutrition education. She is a director at Well Being Africa, an NGO that works towards optimizing human existence through nutrition issues, psychological services and skills development.



<http://www.wellbeingafrica.co.za>

10 Silveridge, 358 President Street, Silverton, Pretoria,
South Africa

6

Top Five Authentic Stomach Ulcer Remedies that Actually Work

Dr. Sylvia Kama-Kieghe

“That burning pain in the middle of the chest. Sometimes, it burns up into her throat; causing very bad discomfort at the top of her tummy as well.

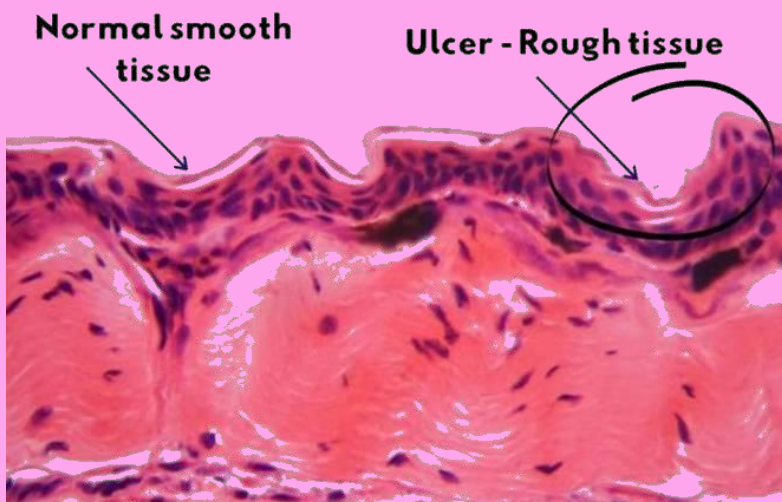
Dela has been getting them more and more. They feel worse after eating.

And now, the usual antacid tablets she takes do not work. At home, she walks slowly up the stairs feeling ill and very bloated. Suddenly she retches.

And bends over forcefully as she starts to vomit - a large amount of bright red blood came pouring out of her mouth. The last thing she remembered as she fell down the stairs was how the bright light at the top of the steps kept fading...”

You may be worried about Dela's experience and wondering how to cure stomach ulcers. Here, we cover the best medical treatments currently available. If you want to learn about stomach ulcers in general, read all.

What is an Ulcer?



Microscopic image of internal cells comparing normal lining to ulcerated lining. (Image credit Canva)

One of the most common types of ulcers most people know is the stomach ulcer; though there are other types such as ulcers in the skin or other parts of the body.

But what does an ulcer mean?

We mostly use the word to describe damage to the lining of tissues in the body including the skin.

In a nutshell, you could liken ulcers to an erosion of the affected tissue or skin. Ulcers can happen anywhere inside the body or outside.

How Do Ulcers Happen?



An Ulcer on the inside of the lower lip.
Image Credit -Canva

Many things can cause damage to the skin or tissue barrier. A cut or tear of the skin or tissue can happen quickly but an ulcer can take longer to develop.

When the parts holding the tissues together break down, the ulcer begins to form. But just as ulcers can develop in different parts of the body, they may do so for different reasons.

Many factors like lack of oxygen supply to a part of the body, or the effect of acid on vulnerable cells could allow an ulcer to form.

Gastrointestinal Ulcers



Ulcers are common in the gastrointestinal tract
Image credit-Canva

A stomach (gastric) ulcer is a type of ulcer that happens in the gastrointestinal system. It is located in the lower part of the stomach.

Another, even more frequently occurring type of gastrointestinal ulcer is the duodenal ulcer. This type is located in the duodenum. The duodenum is the first part of the intestine which runs out of the stomach.

The ulcers in the gastrointestinal system usually happen because of the effect of gastric acid on tissues inside the stomach or other sections. You may also hear these referred to as peptic ulcers. So, the term peptic ulcer refers to both duodenal and stomach (gastric) ulcers.

Normally gastric juices are produced in the stomach. They contain an important component called hydro-

chloric acid which is required for digestion of food in the stomach.

Hydrochloric acid will usually not damage the tissues of the stomach or intestines. But sometimes as a result of certain changes from stress or drugs, the hydrochloric acid can 'burn' the tissues and lead to an ulcer. Another type of gastrointestinal ulcer develops in the food pipe or gullet, known as an oesophageal ulcer

Some Causes of Gastrointestinal Ulcers

So now we know that hydrochloric acid is chiefly associated with creating gastrointestinal ulcers, here are some scenarios where problems with acid are most likely to happen:



Image of the inside of the stomach showing small ulcers - .
Image credit-Canva

- Drugs like anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen or Aspirin) can weaken the lining of the stomach increasing susceptibility to acid and for ulcers developing.

- Certain types of diet can lead to excess weight gain and increase the amount of gastric acid produced by the stomach giving rise to the symptoms of peptic ulcer.

- Chronic stress could increase stomach acid levels making it more likely to develop an ulcer.

● Smoking is known to increase stomach acid production which contributes to the development of ulcers - duodenal ulcers in particular.

● Infections within the gastrointestinal tract from a germ called *Helicobacter pylori*.

Learn about *Helicobacter pylori* (*H.pylori*):

- This is a bacterial germ that we now link closely with Peptic ulcer disease.
- We think that more than 50% of the world's population has the *H.pylori* infection.
- What is even more interesting is that not everyone with the germ gets a peptic ulcer.
- However, among those with peptic ulcers who do have the germ, eradication of *H.pylori* contributes a lot to relieving the symptoms.
- It appears to be more common with Duodenal than gastric ulcers.

Who gets Stomach Ulcers?



Image of the gastrointestinal system
Image credit- Canva

Well, given the right conditions, nearly anyone can have a stomach ulcer.

However, certain factors make one person a lot more likely than another

to develop an ulcer. Looking at some of the causes above, you may already know certain groups of people who may be more at risk:

- Older people appear more at risk than children and younger people to develop a stomach ulcer.
- People who smoke cigarettes do have an increased risk.
- Being overweight and unhealthy food choices is a risk factor.
- We know infection with *H.pylori* can cause ulcer symptoms.

But who is likely to have the germ?

- Well, if you are in lower socio-economic bracket or live in unsanitary over-crowded conditions, you may be more likely to develop *H. Pylori*.
- Studies now show us that *H.pylori* is more prevalent in lower-middle-income countries.
- It also seems more likely to happen in older people.

So this is not an exhaustive list.

But if you have ulcer symptoms, your doctor will be looking at what factors in your life have led you to develop the ulcer.

<https://www.askawayhealth.org>

The Medical Information Platform
Providing Clarity and Direction
About Everything Medical.

Symptoms of Stomach Ulcer



Upper Abdominal pain is a common symptom of stomach ulcer
Image credit-Canva

People with stomach (gastric) ulcer may have one or more of the following:

- Having a pain in the upper tummy (abdomen) is the principal symptom for a gastric ulcer. The pain usually comes and goes initially; and may even wake you from sleep.

- Other symptoms may include:

- A sensation of bloating.

This means your tummy swells because your stomach is full of gas or air.

- Retching.

This is when you feel as though you're about to vomit (be sick) but not actually vomiting.; feeling sick (nausea); vomiting; feeling very 'full' after a meal.

As you know, a duodenal ulcer is more common, but some symptoms are similar. We usually can detect the difference by having a test called endoscopy. Duodenal ulcer symptoms are very similar to that of a gastric ulcer..



As we see, there are several factors to developing stomach (and other gastrointestinal) ulcers. Treatments that are successful will therefore focus on reversing the causes where possible.

It is often the case that you will need more than one focus to treat your condition effectively, but here are the solutions below:

Lifestyle Changes

It is important to address certain aspects of behaviour that can lead to stomach ulcers. This may not apply to everyone, but many people who suffer with stomach ulcers will have an aspect of their lifestyle that they

could change to improve their symptoms:

- **Stop Smoking** - we know that smoking increases stomach acid production. If you smoke and suffer from stomach ulcers, it's a good idea to stop, to allow the ulcer to heal and prevent its recurrence.
- **Maintain a healthy weight** - from a combination of exercise and addressing the quality and quantity of food consumed. Exercise not only helps weight loss but helps with digestion of food within your stomach and intestines.

■ People who do not exercise may be more likely to suffer from constipation which also encourages gas build-up. In addition, healthier food choices that minimise processed foods or foods high in saturated fats help with ulcer symptoms. Examples of these foods are snacks like crisps, meat pies, cakes, deep-fried foods; drinks high in sugar content also fall into this category. Other 'trigger foods' you should avoid include coffee, chocolate, tomatoes or beans – check [here](#) for more examples.

(link-<https://www.askawayhealth.org/dealing-with-indigestion-which-foods-are-ok/>)

And remember portion control - eating smaller meals rather than large meals helps to control symptoms like nausea and help with healing the ulcer.

■ Sleeping Habits - Avoid eating meals 3-4 hours before you lie down to sleep. This reduces the quantity of gastric acid that can irritate the tissues.

During sleep, the muscular valve which usually closes off the food pipe from the stomach relaxes. This could allow acid to pass up from the stomach into the food pipe causing a burning pain in the chest that wakes you from sleep.

■ Alcohol intake - Alcohol can irritate the lining or the inner walls of the gullet, stomach and intestines leading to ulcers.

Cutting down on alcohol intake does reduce symptoms while the ulcer heals.



Eradicating *H.pylori* Infection

We have shown how an infection with *H.pylori* is linked with many peptic ulcers. One of the important solutions for stomach ulcers is testing for this germ, and treatment if the test is positive.

To eradicate the germ, we use a combination of antibiotics with acid-suppressing medicine. In addition, some studies suggest that *probiotics* (and *lactobacilli*) reduce the activity of *H. pylori*.

“Probiotics are live bacteria and yeasts promoted as having various health benefits. They're usually added to *yoghurts* or taken as *food supplements*, and are often described as "good" or "friendly" bacteria.

Probiotics are thought to help restore the natural balance of bacteria in your gut (including your stomach and intestines) when it's been disrupted by an illness or treatment.”

Link- [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/probiotics/)(Link - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/probiotics/>)

One study reports that the use of probiotics before and during eradication treatment for *H.pylori* improved effects of the treatment.

Medicines for treating excess stomach acid

Fortunately, a number of medicines are able to prevent the harmful effects of stomach acid, allowing the ulcer to heal and stop nasty symptoms.

There are three main categories for treating abnormal acid production:

■ PPI - also known as Proton Pump Inhibitors, are very effective in reducing the acid in your stomach making them of great value in treating peptic ulcers as well as acid reflux symptoms.

■ H2 Blockers - are drugs which reduce the amount of acid the stomach produces. They are effective in treating some cases of acid reflux and stomach ulcers.

■ Antacids - these drugs contain aluminium or magnesium combined with alginates. They work by both reducing the acidity in the stomach and creating a protective layer that floats on the top of your stomach contents. This layer helps to prevent acid from running up into your gullet (food pipe or oesophagus). Therefore, they are more effective in treating indigestion (heartburn) symptoms from acid reflux and oesophagitis (irritation of the food pipe). They are commonly sold

over the counter, but while they may help early or mild symptoms of excess acid, they cannot treat stomach ulcers.

Avoid Medicine Triggers

One of the medicines you are taking regularly could be responsible for your stomach ulcer. Most commonly the list of such drugs includes Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) such as low-dose Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Naproxen and several others.

Some other drugs on the list include:

- Steroids,
- Anticoagulants,
- Antidepressants like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
- Treatments for osteoporosis like Alendronate and Risedronate,
- Some types of chemotherapy,
- Recreational drugs like Indian Hemp, Cocaine or Heroin.

It's easy to overlook, but by simply going through your drug cabinet, you could minimise some symptoms.

Surgery

These days, the best treatments for stomach ulcers are a combination of eradicating H.pylori infections and very effective acid suppression medicines.

Surgery will be considered if there is a complication or the ulcer is not responding to the non-surgical treatments.

And Finally...

You should not avoid or delay treating a stomach ulcer.

Common complications are *bleeding from the ulcer* when it grows deep enough to damage the blood vessels nearby.

Bleeding could be small amounts or a heavy, life-threatening bleed. The latter could happen with very serious consequences like the loss of life.

Internal bleeding that is less heavy may cause you to vomit material that looks dark brown or black (like coffee grounds) because the stomach acid breaks down the blood. On the other hand, blood from the stomach ulcer may trickle down into the bowels, mixing with the stool (faeces) and making it look very dark or black.

Most importantly, any of these cases - vomiting fresh red blood, coffee-coloured vomits or dark/black stools are extremely serious and you must seek urgent medical attention if they happen.

Another complication is *perforation* where the ulcer grows all the way through the wall of the stomach

making food and acid leak out of the stomach. Consequently, this will cause severe stomach pain and illness; it is a medical emergency and requires urgent medical attention.

Very rarely, depending on the location of the ulcer in the stomach, a *blockage* in the gastric tracts results. This is the case when the ulcer is near the end of the stomach. Damage to the tissues near the ulcer makes the exit from the stomach into the first part of the small intestine become so narrow; there is obstruction of normal flow of food. There will be frequent vomiting in addition to pain, weight loss and other symptoms.

So as you see, stomach ulcers have the potential to cause extremely serious illness. If you suspect your symptoms are from a stomach ulcer, you should get help from your doctor.

Author - Dr Sylvia Kama-Kieghe

Dr Kama-Kieghe is a General Practitioner with several years of experience and special interest in Sexual, Reproductive and Women's Health.

She is the founder and Lead Clinician of AskAwayHealth.org

(<https://www.askawayhealth.org>)

the medical information platform providing Clarity and Direction About Everything Medical.

Follow her on Twitter - @SylviaKK on Twitter;

Youtube - <https://bit.ly/youtubeaskawayhealth>



A close-up portrait of a young Black woman with dark, curly hair, wearing glasses and smiling. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

*Meet Vivian Chukwu,
Good Food & Healthy Lifestyle
Content Creator*

Vivian's Diary

My name is **VIVIAN CHUKWU**. I am a Logistics Professional, a Customer Service Expert, and currently a Vlogger based in Lagos, Nigeria. I create contents on YouTube. My channel is called **VIVIAN'S DIARY**. At the moment, I present mostly Nigerian recipes revolving around **GOOD FOOD** and **HEALTHY LIFESTYLE** in general.

Food and lifestyle shows have been prominent since the early days of television. In recent times, [YouTube](#) has become a primary home for food and lifestyle contents, empowering nearly everyone with the right tools for high quality content creation.

YouTube allows everyone from amateur content creators such as chefs, artists to seasoned professionals to broadcast from any kitchen or home in the world and this is what motivates

me in creating content besides the fact that this is a hobby that pays.

Cooking is definitely the activity that helps me get rid of the tension or stress built up during the day. When I cook, I get my hands dirty, I do something more physical, which really helps me to break up the routine of the day and kick my mental exhaustion.

Personally, one of the benefits of cooking and being around the kitchen for me is that it boosts

my confidence all the time. There is this **surge of confidence** each time I film a recipe, edit the video and upload the content for my subscribers to watch. I feel that when I intentionally cook a meal for myself or create a new recipe, I am working on something that is totally in my control, and that can realistically be accomplished. This cooking task though potentially small, gives me a sense of power that I might not have naturally had in my daily activities at my workplace outside the kitchen.

Filming food recipes is therapeutic for my creative senses. What's more, when I am putting my artistic efforts into a meal, I am essentially



killing two birds with one stone: I am satisfying my creative urges and doing something that is technically a necessary part of my day.

Look at me, getting things done and living life like a real adult! This is how I feel all the time. (Laughs)

A Recipe Against Cancer



Pineapple
(*Ananas comosus*), the incredible
delicious and healthy tropical fruit, has
anti-inflammatory, antioxidant
properties, and contains also bromelain -
a compound that can help fight cancer.

[Read more](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/benefits-of-pineapple)

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/benefits-of-pineapple>

Vegan diet tips for Cancer Patients



Raw tomatoes give the most nutrients, better than lightly cooked ones. Avoid mixing with commercial (bottled) salad dressings. Simply combine your tomato plant inside salads, hot water for soup, and other types of recipes listed in your food dictionary.

[Click here to read more](#)

<https://healthaon.com/2-tomato-25-anti-cancer-foods-of-all-time/>

Work with a registered dietician to develop the right meal plan for you. However, a vegetarian diet can be safe for anyone under cancer treatment. When planning a meal consider these vegetables:



Broccoli



Cauliflower



Brussels sprouts



Cabbage

As a family, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage look nothing alike on the outside, but among cancer researchers, it's what's inside that counts. Each of these veggies are rich in isothiocyanates and indoles, compounds that put the double blow on cancer by inhibiting enzymes that activate carcinogens and stimulating enzymes that deactivate them.

source: Maureen Callahan, Cancer-Fighting Foods,
<https://www.cookinglight.com/eating-smart/nutrition>

FWHPWI
Anti-Cancer Campaign Team



Margaret Onemu

**Cancer Survivor, member of
FWHPWI tells her story**

7 | A Session with Margret

Dialogue editor , Dr. F N Alaribe Nnadozie

Cancer patients and survivors do benefit from the experience and encouragement of one another. Telling own story to others is without doubt, one important manifestation of caring support and indirect counseling to anyone passing through relative experience. It is for this reason that Foundation for Women's Health Promotion and Welfare Initiatives (FWHPWI) encourages cancer stories, believing firmly that sharing experiences could help alleviate the psycho-trauma that comes with cancer. Living with cancer, cancer survivor, or one who cares for cancer victims, Margaret Onemu wishes to let you know that you are never alone. Share her experience, her support and care for others in this piece of her story to FWHPWI.

F: Hello Margret, would you mind telling us when you were diagnosed with breast cancer?

M: In the year 2014-2015, I started noticing strange negative development in my left breast, and I started going to hospital for tests. Several tests were made and all proved abortive. In December 2016, on one of my hospital appointments, a doctor voluntarily carried out biopsy on my breast that revealed my stage 3 breast cancer.

F: How did you feel when the doctor told you that you have breast cancer?

M: When my doctor told me the biopsy result, I immediately felt a kind of sensational blackout in the whole of my system. It was as if the whole world was placed on me. I cried severely, but no one to comfort me in my predicament because I had no relative in South Africa where I was diagnosed. However, knowing that I have God, I summoned courage that has helped me to overcome this life threatening disease.

F: What were your symptoms before diagnosis?

M: In the year 2014-2015, I started noticing blood coming out from my left breast nipple and gradually I started feeling a lump in my breast.

F: Were you aware that the symptoms you were having before diagnosis were likely to be of breast cancer?

M: I was not aware that the symptoms could be of breast cancer; my previous mammogram and biopsy tests were even abortive. Early menopause was suspected.

F: How did you tell your family and friends about the diagnosis?

M: I did not tell any of my family member because of the distance and I did not want them to start panicking. I only told some of my friends. Most of them were afraid and panicky; but they showed sympathy and support through prayers.

F: What sort of treatment did you receive?

M: I received chemotherapy treatment before I was operated for mastectomy under the arm region to remove some lumps. Thereafter, radiotherapy treatment was administered.

F: What was/is your biggest challenge during cancer treatment and into most survivorship?

M: During the period of my cancer

treatment, life was tougher, no support from any angle. I struggled alone. The challenging day I will never forget was the day the taxi people were on strike and I walked like 10 kilometers from my house to the hospital and vice versa to receive chemotherapy treatment. That day I thought it's over but I still made it alive.

F: Where are you now in your journey with cancer?

M: One cannot predict events of the body, especially with regards to the cancer journey. I am doing well but sometimes the body changes. I am aware that no matter what, my body can never be as it was before the cancer.

F: How do you fill your time at the moment?

M: At the moment, I occupy my time with voluntary works. I am presently with 'Reach for Recovery Organization', South Africa, and Foundation for Women's Health Promotion and Welfare Initiatives also here in South.

F: What advice would you give to other women, especially to women who have been recently diagnosed with breast cancer?

M: My advice for other women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer is that they should not ignore the advice

of their doctors for treatment. The treatment procedure may be tough but you will sail through.

My most important message to all women is this: never ignore the fact that early detection saves life; and never be

scared with the issue of breast cancer. There is life after cancer. Remember, health is a gift though not the glamorous one that brings admiration or envy from friends or relatives, but an essential gift that makes us able to live full lives.

Cancer is a leading cause of premature death in every country in the world

But many of these deaths can be prevented.

[The Cancer Atlas](#)

**Bridge the barrier,
share knowledge
about the gynecological cancers,
their symptoms,
risk factors, preventive measures
and possible remedies!**

A MESSAGE FROM
FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH PROMOTION AND WELFARE INITIATIVES



8 | FWHPWI's Events

FWHPWI members convene periodically for advocacy and outreach aiming at gynaecological cancers awareness, healthy life style education, inclusive early detection tips and aids. Pioneer members of our foundation come from different levels of the society and different professions. Participants together with our members grace our programs with their professional knowhow. Below are some photos.



Above: pioneer members on the occasion of our 1st meeting that took place on the 26th of October 2019 at 85 Steve Biko Road (Adjacent Sunnypark) Pretoria. From left to right, Dr O Adeniyi, LSM MU Ukatu, Dr FN Alaribe, Dr T Mlamla, Ms V Hlungwane, Ms M Marshakpni, Dr S Tankeo, Ms I Tarla and Ms F Cekiso.

Below: Dr Thembi Mlamla presenting keynote speech on “Issues of Gynaecological cancers, HIV/AIDs in the African context.”



All members endeavour to get our anti-cancer campaign to local communities in the form easily understood by the locals, in local languages and in the way the locals themselves handle discussions on femininity.



Left: Ms Ntombekhaya Yalezo delivering a lecture entitled “The Church, the Sangomas and Modern Medicine in the fight against Gynaecological Cancers”

Right: some participants in the lecture hall – on the occasion of our 2nd meeting/outreach, 30 November 2019.

Below: some FWHPWI members on the 3rd meeting/outreach.



Topic of our 3rd outreach event was Nutrition and Cancer. As usual, participants and foundation members graced the program with their professional knowhow. Below are some photos.



Above: Dr Mabuatsela Maphoru. and some of FWHPWI members on dialogue section of the event.

Left: Dr Debbie Kupulati delivering speech on “Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyle.”

Our free of charge elementary health checks were performed. Blood Pressure and Blood Sugar Check was done by one of our Guests, Dr Rafiat Anokwuru; and Body Composition Test by Dr Debbie Kupolati was available for all who wished.

First photo left: Dr. Anokwuru performing on the event of our 3rd meeting/outreach



Extreme left: Dr. Kupulati performing on the event of our 3rd meeting/outreach



Below are the photos of FWHPWI director, Dr. FN. Alaribe engaged in some Voluntary activities with Cancer Association of South Africa, (CANSAs).



(7 February 2020)

Wellness/Pink day at Momentum, Pretoria,
Fundraising for (Brest Care Unit)
Charlottr Maxeke Academic Hospital, Johannesburg



(1 March 2020)
Menlyn Mall, Pretoria



Right: (1 March 2020)
Kolonnade Mall, Pretoria,

Due to the needed social distancing measures and general rules for curbing COVID-19 infection, all FWHPWI events involving public gathering have been on hold since March. We quite miss holding our meeting/outreach events in the warm, and highly profitable normal way of face to face participation. We miss the direct contact of fellow members, supporters and the general public. However, our activities have been running, thanks to our able and competent management/online team who continue to run our programs online.

August 2020 was women's month and cervical cancer awareness month. The import of this remarkable month for women was fully observed by FWHPWI with different awareness talks on women health matters on the 19th, the 22nd and the 29th of the month. On the 19th of August, Dr Nneka F. Alaribe Nnadozie gave awareness talk on cervical cancer, pointing out why it is necessary to go for early detection tests such as Pap test. Dr. Alaribe Nnadozie also stressed on the significant impact of Human papilloma virus (HPV) 'vaccine' for girls from the age of 9 years. On the 22nd, FWHPWI featured a session with Dr Bodun Oluwadare,

a specialist in mental health. He pointed out the importance of maintaining and managing our mental health especially in the present pandemic era. On the 29th, Dr Betty Posuglu enlightened FWHPWI on Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), pointing out why it is important to check for its early detection to avoid complications. Dr. Posuglu reassures that though PCOS isn't curable, it is manageable, and the key to its management lies on one's diet and lifestyle when diagnosed. The program was wrapped up with some life quotes and inspirational talks from some FWHPWI women. Read more on the quotes/inspirational talks on our website

www.foundationforwomenshealth.com



Click to Support Us

<https://gogetfunding.com/healthy-women-healthy-society/>

You are invited to our forthcoming meetings and regular outreach programs. Attendance is completely free. You can partake in the discursions, and you can surely come to grab something new for a healthy lifestyle.



Foundation for Women's Health Promotion and Welfare Initiatives

9

COVID-19 And Stigmatization

Temilade Aruya

Since the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic, the world has recorded alarming and petrifying incidences of infections and deaths; rising from a cluster of cases in December 2019 to a staggering and numbing 68.9 million confirmed cases and over 1.5 million deaths across the globe.

As the pandemic ruthlessly spreads across the world, wreaking havoc without respect for persons, class or race and leaving in its wake hopelessness, gloom and heartache, nations struggle and scramble, sprawling to contain it.

However, in the midst of it all is the cheering news of survivors, victims of the virus who survived the infection and were discharged from various isolation centers. It is, especially, heart-warming to hear that over 44.4 million people have so far recovered from the virus globally.

Essentially, for the survivors, it is like going through the eye of the needle, another chance at life, having gone through the valley of the shadow of death, it is indeed an

indelible lesson not to take life at face value but appreciate every moment of it.

According to medical experts, the virus attacks the body from the lungs and can extend to many organs including the heart and blood vessel, kidneys, gut and brain. “The disease can attack almost anything in the body with devastating consequences”, says a cardiologist, Harlan Krumholz of the Yale University and Yale-New Haven Hospital, who is leading multiple efforts to gather clinical data on COVID-19.

However, it is saddening and unfortunate to discover that having gone through this harrowing experience the survivors were further subjected to unimaginable suffering

and humiliation at the hands of society, as they encounter various degrees of stigmatization ranging from seclusion, harassment, ridicule to violent attacks.

Survivors are seen by some as the plague, to be avoided and ignored, while victims are perceived by some as leeches that must be expunged from the society.

Stigmatization comes in the form of inappropriate behaviors such as emotional, verbal and physical attacks. Sadly, this will only propagate the culture of violence, inhumanity, chaos and disharmony.

Phrases like "Kung-Fu virus", "Chinese Virus" etc have led to uprising and attacks on Asian communities in the United States, likewise Africans in China have also been attacked, humiliated and ejected from their homes and accused of being responsible for spreading the virus.

Basically the dictionary defines stigmatization as "the action of describing or regarding someone or something as worthy of disgrace or

great disapproval". The dictionary states further that "it is a label that is usually limiting in some way". According to Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics 2016 edition, which reviews the definition of stigmatization, its moral status and public health consequences, stigmatization include marginalization and, in some cases, dehumanization. It also notes that "Stigmatization often contributes to poor global health outcomes, particularly for the diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases and mental illness."

Consequently, stigmatization significantly affects the fight against the virus, as it breeds the feelings of shame, hopelessness and isolation, and reluctance to ask for help or get treatment. The result is that people having the virus will go into hiding and end up infecting others thereby weakening the fight against the virus.

In effect, stigmatization and all related abuses or behaviors can be devastating not only to the victims and survivors but the society in

general. To prevent this, family members, friends and others should exhibit more concern and care, giving emotional support and stability to victims and survivors.

Morally, society, government and institutions have a responsibility to build a culture of tolerance, peace and freedom, creating enabling environment for people to seek help, get tested and receive treatment.

Equally, this will encourage and embolden survivors to come out and share their stories thereby demystifying the fear surrounding the virus and empowering the society.

Though, it is a reality that the covid-19 virus has changed our world in a most profound way, affecting the way we live and learn, one thing we must not let it do, is change our humanity and compassion. We should rather come off better by supporting the survivors and the newly infected.

More importantly, we should not allow the COVID pandemic to cage and imprison us, because fear of stigmatization is the reason why some die in silence, spread the infection and wreak more havoc. Remarkably, the major cause of the stigma is fear of the unknown; people are afraid of what they don't understand or can't fathom.

Psychologists and medical experts note that "stigma usually arises from lack of awareness, lack of education, lack of perception and the nature and complication of an illness; for instance, mental illness which exhibits odd behaviors and violence".

Similarly, Covid-19 is a mysterious virus, with high fatality rate and highly virulent therefore it generates a lot of fear across the world and in the minds of people resulting in people trying to protect themselves in every way possible including the use of stigma. It therefore, behooves on

all stake-holders to continually educate, enlighten and sensitize society on COVID-19 and ultimately work towards more effective ways of protecting society and the eradication of stigma which is a major constraint in the fight against the virus.

About the Author: Temilade Aruya is a graduate of English Language from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, and a Managerial Psychology Masters Degree holder from University of Ibadan. Temilade started her career as a journalist at the Lagos State Radio Service, Radio Lagos/Eko FM where she worked for 16 years before transferring to Lagos State Ministry of Information where she is currently. Temilade is passionate about women, children and health issues; a passion which has seen her anchor in various programs on Radio such as Health Focus, Talk line, Office Palava etc. Temilade is happily married with children



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Just a few ways to reduce your risk of gynaecological cancers advised by National Foundation for Cancer Research

➔ Have your Pap test by age 21

The Pap test looks for abnormal cell changes in the cervix to detect cervical cancer in its early stages.

➔ Protect yourself from Human papilloma virus (HPV)

Talk to your doctor about getting the HPV test and HPV vaccine. Also, limit your sexual partners and, when you do have sex, use a condom.

➔ Don't smoke.

Smoking increases the risk of different cancers including cervical, ovarian, vaginal and vulvar cancers.

➔ Make healthy choices.

It's important to maintain a healthy weight, be active and eat a healthy diet consisting of fruit, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains.

➔ Share your family history with your doctor.

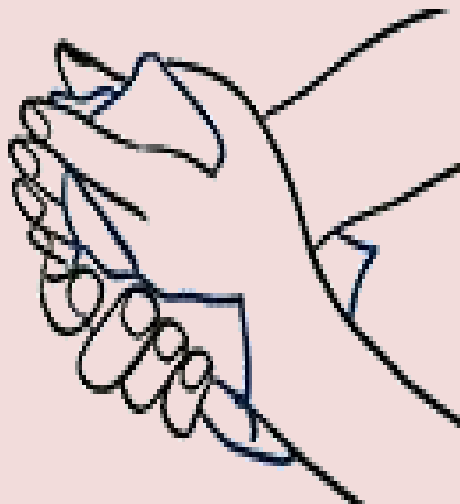
Genetic testing is now available to see if you carry a *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* mutation, which could put you in a high-risk category for ovarian and breast cancer. If you carry a genetic mutation associated to Lynch Syndrome, a heredity condition that increases your risk of colon cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer, etc.

➔ Contact your doctor if you notice any of these symptoms.

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Pelvic pain or pressure
- Abdominal or back pain
- Bloating
- Changes in bathroom habits (increased urination, constipation, diarrhea)
- Itching or burning of the vulva
- Changes in vulva color or skin (rash, sores, warts, ulcers).

nfc.org/

The COVID 19 pandemic is not over.
Never forget this practice.



It is necessary
for your health now and always.
Do it often.
The best for you is to keep safe for
yourself and for us all.

A MESSAGE FROM
FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH PROMOTION AND WELFARE INITIATIVES



10

Effects of Gender Based Domestic Violence and Abuse on Women's General Wellbeing

Dr. Olayinka O Adeniyi

Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, directed against a person because of their gender.¹ Domestic violence is violence within the home, involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner.² Although men experience this violence, it is mostly perpetrated against women and girls by trusted male. It is trite that gender-based violence is a global pandemic.³ Social media and global news report are filled with the daily horrid tales and experiences of women everywhere.

Domestic violence can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial or economic, social, and even spiritual.⁴ Perpetrators may be good looking, nice, well-mannered people, friends, fiancés, husbands, fathers, family members, neighbours; even religious personnel or leaders.⁵

Cases of rape, sexual assault, spousal and wife battery, are increasingly being reported. Typical examples of violence against women and women abuse include child marriage, female genital mutilation, defilement, assault, wife battery, rape, abduction etc.

Cyber violence had added to the list and is increasing daily.⁶

In the recent times, heart rending rape cases reported all over the news.⁷ Sub Sahara Africa has almost the worst cases of violence against women. Africa has the most cases of violence against women.⁸ South Africa is one country with huge record of incidence of violence against women.⁹ Research has it that there was no decline in the cases of domestic violence during this Covid lock down everywhere.¹⁰ The impact of domestic violence on women, families and the society

has made it imperative that the scourge be dealt with. Hence, government everywhere are working together with organisations and communities to eradicate the menace.

Domestic violence affects women on all fronts. It affects them psychologically and mentally, it affects them physically, it affects them socially and affects them economically.¹¹ Domestic violence affects women's health and their general wellbeing. Physical bruises, black eye, broken limbs, other scars, sexual dysfunctions, chronic fatigue, fertility issues, shortness of breath, tension, are most times tell-tale signs of domestic abuse.¹²

Many victims of gender based violence and abuse are afraid of showing up in public with the signs of violence; many shy away from occasions that could reveal these signs; many don't show up at social events or even meet up with friends. Thus, even within their intimate circles, they remain lonely and alone, estranged from those who really care

for them. The mental trauma of domestic violence that victims bear is hectic, though victims try to cover these up many times, especially from close family members and medical personnel who could re-port to the police. Many times, they believe they are at fault and they deserve it. Most times, they fear the threats of the perpetrator; and at other times, it is fear of the uncertainty of receiving help, shame or what hearers would say.

Most victims are emotionally disturbed. In this state, they cannot perform well at work and this affects their economic rewards. Besides, many victims bear the cost of healthcare for their many hurts which results in ulcer, hypertension, depression, migraine, insomnia, anxiety, low self-esteem, and other medical conditions; it creates a hole in their pockets.¹³ Again, from this unstable irrational state, some victims have become murderers, killing their assailants, while some have committed suicide.

The ultimate effect or impact of domestic violence is death.¹⁴ Domestic violence is an infringement on the rights of the victims, right to privacy, personal liberty, life, and that of their reproductive health and rights.¹⁵ Not only this, most of the actions that form these violent acts are criminal in nature.¹⁶ Violence against women are contraventions of legal provision for which penalties exist in the form of imprisonment or fine or both.

While there are mechanisms for access to justice for victims, prevention, they say is better than cure. Domestic violence can be prevented; it can be dealt with and it can be stopped.¹⁷

Women and the society must not be ignorant of these vices.

Women must not be naïve; they should not be too trusting or let go of their instincts. Education and enlightenment on healthy

relationships should be given to women everywhere in educational institutes, women and family groups, religious communities, etc.¹⁸ They must learn to speak out and seek for help when they need it. Help centres and numbers are available.¹⁹

There exist police special units on gender violence and Non Governmental organisations that deal with related issue; whoever has need can always contact them. There are Counselling, legal aid and therapy opportunities available for victims. For instance, in South Africa, you may call SAPS emergency number: 10111.²⁰

Author: Dr. Olayinka O. Adeniyi

LLB, LLM

(Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria);

LLD

(University of Pretoria, South Africa).

Dr. Adeniyi is a barrister and advocate of the Supreme Court of Nigeria; OpenAIR/Advanced QEScholar, Research fellow, Center for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT); CEO/Founder, Women On the Watch (WOW) Society Initiative South African registered NPD).

Email:wow.women@yahoo.com

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'Healthy Women Healthy Society' Magazine
is published by



Address/Office

1101 Zethuishof, 620 Park Street, Arcadia
Pretoria, South Africa

General enquiry

+27604301958; +27715512248

foundationforwomenshealth@gmail.com

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