

7th WORLD CONGRESS ON BREAST CANCER

May 10-11, 2018 | Frankfurt, Germany

Late life gestation: a characteristic predisposing risk factor for breast cancer among career women attending the Elmina Government Hospital, Ghana

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Statement of the Problem: Breast cancer has become a global growing health problem in recent years. In sub-Saharan Africa, breast cancer is responsible for about 1 in 4 diagnosed cancer cases and about 1 in 5 cancer deaths in women. Scientific studies have established that exposure to hormones that are produced by the ovaries namely, estrogen and progesterone increases a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. Late age gestation is linked with an increase in breast cancer risk since such a circumstance allow breast tissue to be exposed to high levels of ovarian hormones for longer periods of time, which stimulates cell growth. Career women get attached to their profession and academics in that, majority of them gets pregnant at a later age of their reproductive life.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose is to establish the link between the risk of developing breast cancer and late life gestation among career women attending the Elmina Government Hospital.

Methods: All patients diagnosed of breast cancer in the hospital were grouped into two categories career and non-career women. Gestation histories were taken from each patient belonging to either category.

Findings: Out of 56 breast cancer patients, 19 (33.9%) were career women and 37 (66.1%) were non-career women. With the 19 career women, 8 (42.1%) had their first child at age >30 years and 11 (57.9%) at age <30 years. With the 37 non-career women, 6 (16.2%) had first child at age >30 years and 31 (83.7%) at age <30 years.

Conclusion: The data collated during the studies established the fact that 57.1% of women with childbirth at age >30 years were career women and 42.9% were non-career women.

Recommendation: Adequate breast cancer awareness needs to be instituted to sensitise women belonging to all genre of work about the predisposing risk factors of breast cancer due to late life gestation.