



## Social sensitization of breast cancer by the directorates of social activity

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*Les questions de santé sont au cœur des programmes les plus importants que les institutions algériennes visent à diffuser dans la communauté, en particulier le cancer du sein qui s'est largement répandu au cours de la période récente. Étant donné que la répartition géographique de la population entre les zones urbaines et rurales peut affecter la répartition équitable du processus de sensibilisation et de prévention, l'intervention sociale joue un rôle clé. Basée sur des méthodes statistiques et d'analytique descriptive, l'étude vise à connaître la relation entre les régions géographiques et la stratégie de communication de l'intervention sociale par les directions en regard de la sensibilisation au cancer du sein et les opinions ou attitudes des femmes à l'égard des campagnes de sensibilisation et de leur capacité de prévenir le cancer, à évaluer les programmes de sensibilisation menés au moyen de statistiques fournies par les institutions officielles et procurer des solutions pour améliorer les programmes existants.*

*Mots-clés : intervention sociale, sensibilisation, femmes, cancer, Algérie*

*Health issues are among the most important programs that Algerian institutions aim to disseminate and raise in the community, especially breast cancer, which has spread significantly in the recent period. Since the geographical distribution of the population between urban and rural areas may affect the equitable distribution of the sensitization and prevention process, social activity plays a key role. Based on statistical and descriptive analytical methods, the study aims to know the relationship between geographical regions and communication strategy of social activity by directorates on sensitization about breast cancer, and the opinions or attitudes of women about sensitization campaigns and its ability to prevent women from cancer, to evaluate the sensitization programs through statistics provided by official institutions and bring solutions to improve existing programs.*

*Keywords: social activity, sensibilization, women, cancer, Algeria.*

*Las cuestiones de salud figuran entre los programas más importantes que las instituciones argelinas tratan de difundir y criar en la comunidad, especialmente el cáncer de mama, que se ha extendido considerablemente en el período reciente. Dado que la distribución geográfica de la población entre las zonas urbanas y rurales puede afectar a la distribución equitativa del proceso de sensibilización y prevención, la actividad social desempeña un papel fundamental. Basado en métodos analíticos estadísticos y descriptivos, el estudio pretende conocer la relación entre las regiones geográficas y la estrategia de comunicación de la actividad social por las direcciones de sensibilización sobre el cáncer de mama, y las opiniones o actitudes de las mujeres sobre las campañas de sensibilización y su capacidad para prevenir el cáncer, evaluar los programas de sensibilización mediante estadísticas proporcionadas por instituciones oficiales y ofrecer soluciones para mejorar y activar los programas actuales.*

*Palabras clave : actividad social, sensibilización, mujeres, cáncer, Argelia.*

### Social planning for breast cancer patients in Algeria

Since independence, Algeria has established a system of social activity based on justice in the distribution of aid. But looking at institutions in charge of social activity all rely on a centralized system, far from isolated and rural areas, especially if we know that the population in rural areas more than the population of cities and urban areas. This government funding also touched on scientific research to find out the real causes of breast cancer.

The government has established the Higher Committee for Combating Cancer in addition to investing university research in this field in order to find possible solutions to this disease. Statistics provided by the Cancer Society in 2017 show that the number of women with breast cancer in rural areas is twice of women in urban areas.

Algeria has adopted a free policy in the process of sensitization of this disease, especially early detection through convoys to sensitize the seriousness of the disease, as well as the opening of free centers to examine women in order to detect the presence of this disease and referred in case of infection to specialized hospitals (Kadri, 2018).

The social plan in Algeria depends on several aspects:

- The government provides free testing and treatment for people with cancer: The Algerian government announced the National Cancer Control Plan 2015-2019. "During this period, the government improved the offers of treatment in the field of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. 41 departments and 77 chemotherapy units were established, operating normally throughout the country.
- For the sake of prevention, the government announced a set of laws and regulations to combat the causes of cancer such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and substance abuse, as well as developing healthy lifestyles.
- Creation of directorates distributed in all states of the country charged to social activity: Since the early years of independence, the government has created directorates in charge of social activity, especially with regard to poor social groups and those with special needs, including cancer patients.
- Organizing awareness campaigns to prevent breast cancer: official institutions and associations active in the field of health and women have adopted several sensitization campaigns to educate women about the risk of breast cancer and work to prevent it by clarifying its first symptoms.
- Adopt a national cancer control plan: since 2015, Algeria has adopted a national plan to combat cancer and reduce its spread. This chart includes 8 axes.

These axes concern four types of cancer, which represent 50% of the total cancers spread in Algeria according to the National Cancer Registry, there are 50,000 new cases per year, a large proportion of them involving breast, colorectal, lung and prostate cancer. In order to reduce the incidence of these four types, the Ministry of Health has launched campaigns for the early detection of breast cancer in seven pilot states in Algeria (Kadri, 2018).

- Improve treatment and good patient follow-up: there are 100 centers specialized in chemotherapy for breast cancer patients distributed throughout the regions of Algeria and to help the poor the government established the National Cancer Fund, which contains

30 billion dinars funded by the state treasury. This government funding also touched on scientific research to find out the real causes of breast cancer.

The government has established the Higher Committee for Combating Cancer in addition to investing university research in this field in order to find possible solutions to this disease (Zitouni, 2019).

### **Social culture about breast cancer in Algeria**

Algerian society is a conservative society that is very interested in the society's perception of the individual. Customs and traditions have a great place, especially in rural areas where families still regard men and women as different values. Men gain value from their social status and ability to take responsibility and care for their family. While women gain their value from the perfection of their femininity and maintain their honor and take responsibility for the home they care for.

In this sense, women are more afraid of breast cancer from a social point of view than a health aspect. They often lose an important part of their femininity, which makes society in general and the husband in particular look at them. Incomplete look, especially if the woman is under forty.

Women diagnosed with cancer face significant psychological pressures that make them susceptible to stress, frustration, despair and depression, affecting the effectiveness of medical treatments and their behavior and relationships with those around them.

The psychological state is sometimes a major obstacle to the treatment and recovery of such a malignant tumor, and its impact may be greater than the detection of cancer in the early or late stages, but the patient can accept the disease and continue her life normally and seek treatment, but all linked to the extent of psychological support of the hospital and its family and social center.

Most surgeons and oncologists in the Arab world have not received any psychological training to develop their skills in dealing with cancer patients in general, whether before or after surgery or during chemotherapy and radiation.

Doctors treat such cases with their medical expertise only, although psychiatric rehabilitation in such cases is very important.

The curricula of medical schools in the Arab countries are very deficient in both theoretical teaching and practical training of psychiatry, especially in dealing with cancer patients in general and gynecological tumors in particular. The emergence of breast cancer among young women under 30 years of age requires psychological rehabilitation of patients before and after surgery or during different treatment periods.

### **Breast cancer and health awareness in Algeria**

Several factors play a role in breast cancer, such as genetics, genes, alcohol and obesity, among others. But scientists have not yet understood the exact mechanism of the disease, so the World Health Organization says that in addition to the need to prevent the disease, people must also be educated on ways to detect early breast cancer (Almass, 2017).

In Algeria, more than 11,000 cases of breast cancer are reported each year. However, the number of women with breast cancer in Algeria is more than official statistics, because there are no accurate statistics of disease in rural areas for physical reasons and the nature of societies.

Professor Kamal Bouzid, responsible for the Department of Cancer Oncology in Pierre and Marie Curie National Cancer, estimates that 50,000 new cancer cases are registered annually at the national level starting in 2025.

The President of the National Registry Network, Professor Douja Hamouda, said 103 new cancer cases per 100,000 people, warned of a possible rise in cancer rates in the future due to changing environmental factors, individual behaviors and high smoking rates. Algeria is one of the countries that could see an increase in cancer rates, which could reach 61,000 cases a year, If the government does not take all measures to control this disease, especially breast cancer.

The high incidence of breast cancer in Algeria is the result of poor medical coverage and unconsciousness, which often lead to the discovery of the disease in the third stage, which is a late stage, sometimes requires intensive medical care for the patient, in addition to undergoing chemotherapy and radiation.

Health education and social activism play an important role in reducing the incidence of breast cancer, There are many sensitization campaigns in the context of social activity related to the fight against breast cancer, such as pink month "October", which devotes to awareness campaigns and organizing mobile convoys to sensitize the risk of cancer and the need for early screening (Dawi, 2018). In turn, the directorates of social activity organize periodic campaigns and awareness meetings in order to raise the level of awareness among women, whether sick or not with cancer.

Many women's and health associations also organize awareness campaigns to reduce cancer. These associations are active in coordination with the official departments, but they do not use the media much to publicize their activities.

Health awareness about breast cancer in Algeria has the following characteristics:

- Weak planning: most awareness campaigns on breast cancer lack good planning in terms of good coverage for all groups concerned because of the limited publicity of these campaigns. So the majority of women are unaware of the existence of these campaigns and are not expose to it or do not benefit from its objectives.
- Organizing awareness campaigns in urban areas: the exclusion of rural areas deprives millions of women from benefiting from these sensitization campaigns, as the lack of transportation prevents many women from moving to the city to attend these campaigns.
- Lack of coordination between different sectors: awareness campaigns are usually organized individually by various actors such as associations, official directorates or the media. Lack of coordination loses sensitization campaigns a chance Combining efforts to draw up an integrated plan aimed at following up the patient until his recovery.
- Engage specialists in health Awareness: Many breast cancer awareness campaigns are based on doctors and specialists who explain everything related to the disease, prevention and treatment. This gives confidence to those exposed to these campaigns and increases the level of awareness by asking more questions about this disease and receiving answers.
- Ignorance of the personal differences of the audience of the campaign: the sensitization campaigns do not care about individual differences among the targeted women such as marital status, place of residence and educational level. Although these differences often constitute an important part in the success or failure of the campaign sensitization.

## Applied Study

In this field study, we questioned 200 women have breast cancer, 100 of them in rural areas and 100 women in cities, using the questionnaire tool, in order to find their opinions on the awareness campaigns organized by the directorates of social activity.

In the following table we will show the most important answers in percentages:

Questions	Answers			
	Women in urban areas	%	Women in rural areas	%
What is your educational level?	Less than primary	11	Less than primary	54
Did you know that there are awareness campaigns about breast cancer?	yes	84	yes	14
Have you ever attended one of these sensitization campaigns?	yes	71	yes	3
If yes, have you benefited from these campaigns?	yes	52	yes	2
What prevented you from attending these sensitization campaigns?	Society's perception	63	Distance and fiscal deficit	84
Is there enough information about these campaigns before launched?	yes	32	yes	9
Do you receive enough information about the disease during the sensitization campaign?	yes	89	yes	84
Will the organizers communicate with you after the sensitization campaign to follow up the treatment?	yes	12	yes	0
Are your personal information taken by campaign organizers?	yes	12	yes	0
Were you to avoid some of the actions that caused your illness or aggravated your illness if you follow the sensitization campaigns in time?	yes	82	yes	91

## Among the results

1. There is interest in the awareness campaigns on breast cancer in Algeria by the official and unofficial directorates, but this interest has many negative aspects such as:
  - Lack of coordination between the various parties concerned with breast cancer in order to draw up a joint plan to fight the disease, such as associations, media and researchers.
  - Poor media about awareness campaigns makes attendance at these events few.
  - Most of the awareness campaigns are organized in urban areas, which gives the chance to attend only for women in these areas and not women in rural areas.
2. Women benefit greatly from the information they receive from awareness campaigns, especially that these awareness campaigns are active by doctors and specialists in the field.
3. There are many differences between women with breast cancer such as educational level, social level and area of residence. These differences are not taken by the directorates of social activity in the organization of awareness campaigns, which makes the impact of these campaigns different between each category of women.

4. Women with breast cancer in rural areas are more excluded from sensitization campaigns than women in urban areas. While community perception is the important reason women in urban areas do not attend sensitization campaigns, distance and poverty play an important reason why women in rural areas do not attend breast cancer awareness campaigns.
5. Deprived women of sensitization campaigns about breast cancer may contribute to breast cancer by not stopping some cancer-causing behaviors or worsening their health.
6. There is no follow-up by the organizers of sensitization campaigns such as follow-up of patients' condition or connect permanent contacts with them. The link between social activity directorates and these women often breaks after the sensitization campaign ends.
7. Most women are willing to increase awareness campaigns and learn more about breast cancer to improve their health.
8. There is insufficient care for breast cancer patients at the health center level, especially the timing of the chemical sessions and the drugs for the disease.

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