

# Public Screening for Breast Cancer in Primary Healthcare Centers in Saudi Arabia

**SALEH SAEED BIN SAUD ALYAMI<sup>1</sup>, ModhiSardi Saadi Alshammari<sup>2</sup>, Shuaa Mohammed Alduraibi<sup>3</sup>, Dana Abdulsalam Almishri<sup>4</sup>, Abduldaim Fahad Alkhraiji<sup>5</sup>, Nedaa Mohammed Ali Alromaili<sup>6</sup>, Wafa Abdulrahman Ibrahim Alshuayfan<sup>7</sup>, Layali mohammadAlreshidi<sup>8</sup>, Hadeel Abdullah Alziyadi<sup>9</sup>, Amjad Fahad Alafnan<sup>10</sup>, ESRA ALI ALHWSAWI <sup>11</sup>, Amal Mohammad saudBinomran<sup>12</sup>**

- 1- Public Health - specialist, Ministry of Health -Habona General Hospital, Najran , KSA
- 2- Family medicine Senior registrar, Riyadh Second Cluster,Ministry of Health, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 3- -Family medicine consultant, Riyadh Second Cluster,Ministry of Health, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 4- Family medicine consultant, Riyadh second health cluster, KFMC
- 5- Professor, Obstetrics and gynecology, Alfalah PHC, Saudi Arabia
- 6- General practitioner - Family Medicine, Alfalah Healthcare Center, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 7- General practitioner -family medicine, AlmontazahAlgharbi Healthcare center, Hail, Saudi Arabia
- 8- General practitioner -family medicine, AlmontazahAlsharqi Healthcare center, Hail, Saudi Arabia
- 9- General practitioner -family medicine, Alkhamashiah Healthcare Center, Hail, Saudi Arabia
- 10- Family medicine consultant, Hail aljamieiyaphc, Saudi Arabia
- 11- Family medicine senior registrar, Ministry of health, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 12- Family medicine registrar, Riyadh second cluster, Ministry of Health, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

## Abstract:

Breast cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer-related mortality among women in Saudi Arabia, making public screening a critical component of early detection and treatment efforts. In recent years, the Saudi Ministry of Health has emphasized the importance of screening programs within primary healthcare centers to improve awareness and promote regular breast cancer screenings. These initiatives aim to educate women about the risk factors, symptoms, and benefits of early detection, while also addressing cultural barriers that may prevent women from seeking medical care. Engaging healthcare providers to offer these services in a supportive and culturally sensitive environment is essential for increasing participation rates in screening programs. The implementation of public screening programs for breast cancer in primary healthcare centers not only facilitates greater access to diagnostic services but also fosters a sense of community and support among women. Mobile screening units and community outreach programs are being utilized to reach underserved populations, ensuring that all women have the opportunity to undergo regular screenings. Additionally, collaboration between healthcare providers, community leaders, and advocacy groups plays a pivotal role in raising awareness and dispelling misconceptions about breast cancer. By prioritizing education, accessibility, and cultural sensitivity, Saudi Arabia aims to enhance the effectiveness of its public health strategies and ultimately reduce breast cancer morbidity and mortality rates.

**Keywords:** Breast Cancer, Public Screening, Primary Healthcare Centers, Saudi Arabia, Early Detection, Education, Community Outreach, Cultural Sensitivity, Accessibility, Healthcare Providers

## Introduction:

Breast cancer remains the most prevalent form of cancer among women worldwide, representing a significant public health concern. In Saudi Arabia, recent decades have witnessed a concerning rise in the incidence of this disease, paralleling trends observed globally. According to the Saudi Cancer Registry, breast cancer accounted for approximately 27% of all cancer cases reported among women in the country in 2020. This statistic underlines the pressing need for effective screening programs aimed at early detection—an approach widely acknowledged to enhance survival rates and improve the quality of life of affected individuals [1].

Public health initiatives focusing on breast cancer screening are particularly crucial in the context of Saudi Arabia, where cultural, social, and economic factors contribute to varied health-seeking behaviors among women. The Kingdom has embarked on a transformative journey to improve its healthcare infrastructure, following the guidelines laid out in Vision 2030, which emphasizes the importance of preventative health measures. As part of this initiative, primary healthcare centers (PHCs) play a pivotal role in the early detection of diseases, including breast cancer, due to their accessibility and capacity for community engagement [2].

The concept of public screening involves systematic examinations of asymptomatic individuals to identify disease in its early stages. In the context of breast cancer, this typically includes clinical breast examinations (CBEs) and mammography screenings. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that organized screening programs

be established in countries experiencing a significant burden of breast cancer. Such programs have been shown to reduce breast cancer mortality rates by identifying cancer in its treatable stages, subsequently reducing the need for aggressive treatments and improving patient outcomes [3].

Despite the recognized benefits of breast cancer screening, several barriers exist that hinder its widespread implementation in Saudi Arabia. Cultural sensitivities surrounding women's health, limited awareness of breast cancer risk factors and symptoms, inadequate educational resources, and logistical challenges in accessing healthcare services all pose significant obstacles. Furthermore, there is a notable discrepancy in the availability and provision of screening services between urban and rural areas, exacerbating health disparities within the population [4].

Research indicates that community-based interventions can be effective in addressing these barriers, raising awareness, and encouraging participation in screening programs. Engaging healthcare professionals in training and facilitating culturally sensitive educational campaigns can drive positive health-seeking behaviors. Moreover, integrating screening initiatives within existing healthcare frameworks, particularly in primary healthcare settings, can promote accessibility and continuity of care [5].

Given the importance of early detection and the particular demographic and cultural context of Saudi Arabia, this research aims to analyze the state of public screening for breast cancer in primary healthcare centers. We will explore current screening practices, evaluate the level of awareness among women regarding breast cancer, and identify factors that influence participation rates. This study will draw on qualitative and quantitative data collected from women attending PHCs, healthcare providers, and health policymakers to provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness and challenges associated with breast cancer screening initiatives [6].

#### **Current Landscape of Breast Cancer Incidence and Mortality:**

Breast cancer remains one of the most significant public health challenges globally, representing a major concern for women's health. As the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths, understanding the current landscape of breast cancer incidence and mortality is crucial for policymakers, healthcare providers, and researchers alike [6].

Globally, breast cancer incidence has been on the rise over the past few decades. According to the Global Cancer Observatory, in 2020, there were approximately 2.3 million new cases of breast cancer diagnosed worldwide, accounting for 11.7% of all new cancer cases. This increase can be attributed to various factors, including demographic changes, lifestyle modifications, and improved detection methods. Notably, breast cancer incidence varies significantly by region, with higher rates observed in high-income countries compared to low- and middle-income countries. For instance, the United States, Canada, and several Western European countries report some of the highest incidence rates, while lower rates are noted in parts of Asia and Africa [7].

Several factors contribute to the disparities in breast cancer incidence. Socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, and cultural attitudes towards health screening play pivotal roles. In high-income countries, the widespread availability of mammography and other screening techniques has led to earlier detection and increased reporting of cases. Conversely, in low-income countries, limited access to healthcare services and screening programs often results in later-stage diagnoses, contributing to poorer outcomes [8].

Despite advancements in treatment and early detection, breast cancer remains a leading cause of cancer mortality among women. The World Health Organization reported that in 2020, breast cancer accounted for approximately 685,000 deaths worldwide, making it the most fatal cancer among women. The mortality rate varies significantly by region, influenced by factors such as healthcare access, treatment availability, and public health policies [8].

In high-income countries, the five-year survival rate for breast cancer has improved dramatically, with rates exceeding 90% in many regions. This improvement is largely attributed to early detection through screening programs, advancements in treatment modalities, and increased awareness of the disease. In contrast, low- and middle-income countries often report significantly lower survival rates, with five-year survival rates ranging from 40% to 70%. These disparities highlight the urgent need for improved healthcare infrastructure, access to diagnostic services, and treatment options in these regions [9].

#### **Risk Factors for Breast Cancer**

Understanding the risk factors associated with breast cancer is essential for prevention and early detection strategies. Several known risk factors contribute to the likelihood of developing breast cancer, including:

1. **Genetic Factors:** Approximately 15-20% of breast cancer cases are thought to be hereditary, with mutations in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes being the most notable. Women with these mutations face a significantly increased risk of developing breast and ovarian cancers [10].
2. **Age:** The risk of breast cancer increases with age, with the majority of cases diagnosed in women over 50. This age-related risk underscores the importance of regular screening for older women.

3. **Hormonal Factors:** Hormonal exposure is a significant risk factor, with factors such as early menarche, late menopause, and hormone replacement therapy contributing to increased risk. Additionally, women who have had children later in life or have not breastfed may also have a higher risk [10].
4. **Lifestyle Factors:** Lifestyle choices, including alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, and obesity, have been linked to increased breast cancer risk. Public health initiatives aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles can play a crucial role in reducing incidence rates.
5. **Environmental Factors:** Emerging research suggests that environmental exposures, including certain chemicals and radiation, may also contribute to breast cancer risk. Ongoing studies are needed to better understand these associations [10].

#### **Advances in Treatment and Prevention**

The landscape of breast cancer treatment has evolved significantly over the past few decades, leading to improved outcomes for many patients. Treatment modalities now include a combination of surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and targeted therapies. The choice of treatment depends on various factors, including the stage of cancer, hormone receptor status, and the patient's overall health [11].

1. **Surgical Advances:** Surgical techniques have progressed from radical mastectomies to more conservative approaches, such as lumpectomy and sentinel lymph node biopsy, which aim to preserve as much breast tissue as possible while effectively removing cancerous cells [11].
2. **Targeted Therapies:** The development of targeted therapies has revolutionized breast cancer treatment, particularly for HER2-positive and hormone receptor-positive breast cancers. Drugs like trastuzumab (Herceptin) and aromatase inhibitors have shown significant efficacy in improving survival rates.
3. **Immunotherapy:** Research into immunotherapy for breast cancer is ongoing, with promising results in certain subtypes of the disease. This approach harnesses the body's immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells, offering hope for more personalized treatment options [11].
4. **Preventive Strategies:** Preventive measures, such as prophylactic mastectomy and oophorectomy for high-risk women, have become more common. Genetic testing allows for better risk assessment and tailored prevention strategies, empowering women to make informed decisions about their health.
5. **Screening and Early Detection:** Enhanced screening techniques, including digital mammography and breast MRI, have improved early detection rates. Public health campaigns aimed at increasing awareness and encouraging regular screening have been instrumental in identifying breast cancer at earlier stages [11].

#### **Public Awareness and Attitudes Towards Breast Cancer Screening:**

Breast cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related morbidity and mortality globally. Its prevalence and the substantial burden it imposes on individuals, families, and health systems underline the necessity of effective early detection strategies. Among these strategies, routine breast cancer screening has emerged as a key intervention to improve outcomes. However, the effectiveness of breast cancer screening is highly dependent on public awareness and attitudes towards the screening process [12].

Breast cancer screening typically involves clinical breast examinations, mammography, and breast ultrasound. The primary aim is to detect breast cancer at an early stage when the chances of successful treatment are at their highest. Recommendations from organizations like the American Cancer Society suggest that women begin to receive annual mammograms at the age of 45, transitioning to biennial screenings at age 55, while earlier screening may be warranted for those with a family history or other risk factors [13].

Despite these guidelines, participation rates in breast cancer screening programs vary significantly across different demographics, influenced by factors such as education, socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs, and healthcare access. Understanding how the public perceives breast cancer screening is crucial for increasing participation rates, improving health outcomes, and ultimately saving lives [13].

Public awareness of breast cancer and related screening practices is critical for fostering a proactive approach to health. Awareness encompasses knowledge regarding the disease, including its symptoms, risk factors, and the benefits and limitations of screening methods. Numerous epidemiological studies highlight that informed individuals are more likely to engage in screening [14].

However, awareness levels can be inconsistent. Research indicates that while many women are familiar with breast cancer and its dangers, misconceptions about screening—such as fears about radiation exposure from mammograms or beliefs that early detection may not significantly impact survival—can persist. Additionally, disparities in health education access can contribute to unequal awareness levels among various population segments. For instance, women living in rural areas or from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may have less exposure to breast cancer campaigns and education programs, hindering their knowledge of available screening options [15].

Attitudes toward breast cancer screening are influenced by a myriad of factors, including personal beliefs, cultural norms, previous experiences with the healthcare system, and health literacy. Positive attitudes toward screening

often result from proper education and understanding of the benefits of early detection. Many women view screening as a vital part of women's health, helping to empower them to take control of their health outcomes. On the contrary, negative attitudes may stem from fears of a possible cancer diagnosis, discomfort associated with screening procedures, or the perception that screening is unnecessary in the absence of symptoms [16].

Cultural beliefs also play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward breast cancer screening. In some communities, stigma surrounding cancer and its treatment may dissuade women from participating in screening programs. Furthermore, fear of the implications of a positive diagnosis can lead to avoidance behavior. Thus, it is critical for public health campaigns to address not only the informational aspect of breast cancer screening but also the emotional and psychological factors that influence attitudes [17].

The interplay of awareness and attitudes toward breast cancer screening can significantly affect actual participation rates. Studies consistently show that higher levels of awareness correlate with increased screening rates. Conversely, negative attitudes often correlate with lower participation [18].

To enhance screening rates, it is essential to develop comprehensive public health strategies that consider both awareness and attitudes. Targeted education campaigns that use culturally relevant messaging can help demystify the screening process and dispel common myths about breast cancer. For instance, local health organizations can leverage community leaders and trusted figures to disseminate information, create supportive environments, and facilitate discussions about the importance of screening [19].

Moreover, improving healthcare access is crucial. Barriers such as transportation, costs, and lack of health insurance are significant impediments to screening participation. Expanding access to mobile screening units and community-based clinics can address these concerns. Programs that offer free or subsidized screenings can also serve to increase participation among underserved populations [20].

#### **Implementation Strategies for Screening Programs in Primary Healthcare:**

Breast cancer remains one of the most prevalent forms of cancer among women worldwide, contributing significantly to global morbidity and mortality. The early detection of breast cancer through effective screening programs can greatly enhance survival rates and improve treatment outcomes. Therefore, the implementation of screening programs in primary health care settings is essential. This necessitates a multidimensional approach that encompasses awareness, accessibility, education, and data utilization [21].

The primary goal of breast cancer screening is early detection. Studies have demonstrated that screening can reduce breast cancer mortality by 20% to 30%, mainly through the identification of cancers at earlier stages when they are more manageable and less likely to require aggressive treatments. Localizing mammography, clinical breast examinations, and breast self-examinations constitute the fundamental modalities of breast cancer screening. These screening tools are critical for fostering awareness and facilitating timely interventions [22].

One of the most vital strategies for implementing successful breast cancer screening programs is the active engagement of the community. This involves investing in awareness campaigns designed to educate women about the significance of regular screenings, the risk factors associated with breast cancer, and the benefits of early detection [22].

Public health initiatives can utilize various media channels, such as social media, television, and local newspapers, to disseminate information. Hosting community workshops, seminars, and events encourages women to discuss their health and consider screening practices. Additionally, partnering with local organizations, such as women's groups and health clubs, can amplify outreach efforts, particularly in underserved communities [23].

Accessibility is a significant principle in developing effective screening programs. Barriers such as geographic distance, financial constraints, cultural attitudes, and lack of transportation can inhibit women's access to screening services [23].

To mitigate these challenges, healthcare systems should adopt flexible models such as mobile screening units that offer mammograms and educational resources in underserved areas. Scheduling screenings during after-hours or weekends can also accommodate women who have work or familial obligations during typical hours. Additionally, implementing sliding-scale payment options or collaborating with local insurers to provide free or low-cost screenings can greatly alleviate financial burdens [24].

Primary care providers play a crucial role in the implementation of breast cancer screening programs. They must be well-trained in the guidelines for breast cancer screening, risk assessment, and the appropriate referral pathways for further diagnosis and treatment. Continuous professional education and training programs should be established to keep healthcare providers updated with the latest research findings and technological advances in screening methods [25].

Furthermore, primary care providers should actively participate in reminding patients of their screening schedules during routine health check-ups. Establishing reminder systems via phone calls, SMS, or email can significantly increase adherence to screening recommendations.

Cultural beliefs and attitudes toward health services can profoundly impact breast cancer screening uptake. Thus, healthcare programs must be culturally sensitive and tailored to meet diverse community needs [26].

Engaging community leaders and organizations representing various cultural groups can foster trust and encourage participation. For instance, providing educational materials in multiple languages and utilizing culturally relevant messaging can enhance the acceptance of screening initiatives [27].

Moreover, initiating dialogues within community settings can debunk myths and alleviate fears regarding breast cancer screening, leading to a more informed public willing to engage with healthcare systems.

The implementation of screening programs can significantly benefit from the integration of technology. Electronic health records (EHR) can be utilized to monitor screening rates, manage patient reminders, and facilitate follow-up care. Using data analytics to track screening outcomes can help identify trends, operational challenges, and opportunities for improvement [27].

Telehealth solutions can also complement traditional screening approaches, particularly for patient education and risk assessment. Virtual consultations can provide a platform for patients to discuss their concerns, understand the screening process, and receive guidance on next steps.

The support of governmental policies and public health funding is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of breast cancer screening programs. Leaders in public health and advocacy must work collaboratively to develop policies that prioritize breast cancer screening as a fundamental aspect of women's health [28].

Allocating resources to support community outreach, training programs for healthcare providers, and technology integration can help establish stable screening initiatives. Additionally, advocating for increased funding for breast cancer research can ultimately lead to advancements in screening techniques and treatment options [28].

#### **Cultural Barriers and Facilitators to Screening Participation:**

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting women worldwide, and early detection through screening significantly improves survival rates. Despite the known benefits of early diagnosis, participation in breast cancer screening programs varies widely across different populations, influenced heavily by cultural factors. Understanding the cultural barriers and facilitators to participation is essential for the development of effective public health strategies tailored to diverse populations [28].

Breast cancer screening usually involves mammography, which has been shown to reduce breast cancer mortality. The goal of screening is to detect cancer before symptoms appear, allowing for timely intervention. However, uptake of screening varies significantly across different demographic groups. Factors such as age, income, education, and ethnicity all intersect to create unique challenges and opportunities for participation in screening programs [29].

#### **Cultural Barriers to Participation**

1. **Beliefs and Misconceptions:** In many cultures, there are prevalent myths and misconceptions about breast cancer and its treatment. Some individuals may view the disease as a death sentence, leading to apathy towards screening. Others may believe that cancer is a result of divine punishment or that seeking medical help conflicts with religious beliefs. Such misconceptions can deter individuals from pursuing screening, as they may feel hopeless about the outcomes [30].
2. **Stigmas and Taboos:** In certain cultures, discussing topics related to breast health or cancer is taboo. This silence can foster a culture of fear and shame surrounding the disease. Women may fear judgment or ostracism from their community for acknowledging symptoms or seeking help, thus hampering their engagement with screening services. In some cultures, breast cancer is associated with femininity and sexuality, leading many women to avoid discussions of their health to evade social stigma [30].
3. **Access and Logistics:** Cultural barriers may be compounded by logistical challenges, such as availability of screening facilities and transportation issues. In rural or underserved urban areas, access to screening locations can be limited. Costs associated with screening, whether through health insurance or out-of-pocket, can also serve as a deterrent, especially in communities with lower income levels. In some cases, religious or cultural practices may require women to seek screening only from female healthcare providers, further limiting options.
4. **Language Barriers:** Language is a crucial barrier in health communication. Women who have a limited understanding of the dominant language in their region may struggle to comprehend health information regarding breast cancer. This limitation can affect their ability to make informed decisions about seeking screening, understanding the procedures involved, or even accessing healthcare services effectively.
5. **Distrust of Healthcare Systems:** Historical injustices and ongoing disparities in healthcare can lead to a profound distrust in medical systems among certain ethnic or cultural groups. Communities that have experienced discrimination or exploitation in medical research may be particularly wary of screening

programs. This lack of trust can manifest as hesitation or refusal to engage with preventative health measures, including breast cancer screening [30].

### **Cultural Facilitators to Participation**

While there are formidable barriers to participation in breast cancer screening, various cultural facilitators also encourage women to engage in these essential health services [31].

1. **Community Engagement:** Outreach programs tailored to specific cultural communities can facilitate participation by fostering trust and encouraging dialogue about breast health. Community health workers who understand the cultural context of the populations they serve can effectively address concerns and misconceptions. Utilizing culturally relevant materials and strategies can enhance awareness and encourage women to participate in screening [31].
2. **Peer Support Networks:** Social networks within cultural communities can serve as an influential facilitator for screening uptake. Women are more likely to pursue screening when they observe their peers or family members engaging in such practices. This sense of collective action can counteract stigma and foster a supportive environment where discussions about breast health become normalized [31].
3. **Culturally Sensitive Education:** Tailored educational initiatives that respect and integrate cultural values can enhance understanding and acceptance of breast cancer screening. Providing information in multiple languages and formats that resonate with the target audience can deconstruct myths and empower women with knowledge. For instance, storytelling methods used in some cultures can effectively communicate the importance of screening through relatable narratives [31].
4. **Cultural Competence in Healthcare:** Training healthcare professionals to be culturally competent is crucial for improving participation rates. Providers who acknowledge and respect cultural differences can create an environment conducive to open communication. When patients feel understood and respected, they are more likely to seek and adhere to recommended screening practices.
5. **Policy Interventions:** Effective public health policies that consider cultural barriers can facilitate wider access to breast cancer screening. Programs that provide free or low-cost mammograms, transportation services, or mobile screening units in underserved areas can help bridge access gaps. Additionally, policy measures that promote diversity in research and healthcare workforce ensure that the needs of varying populations are met [31].

### **Effectiveness of Screening Programs: Outcomes and Statistics:**

Breast cancer remains one of the most prevalent forms of cancer among women worldwide. It is a significant public health concern, necessitating effective strategies for early detection and treatment to enhance survival rates. One of the essential tools in combating breast cancer is screening programs, which are designed to identify the disease at an early stage before symptoms manifest [32].

Breast cancer screening involves the use of various methods to detect cancerous changes in breast tissue before clinical symptoms appear. The most common screening methods include mammography, clinical breast examinations, and breast self-examinations. Among these, mammography stands out as the most effective and widely adopted screening method.

Mammograms are X-ray images that can identify abnormalities in breast tissue. The primary aim is to detect breast cancer at an early stage when it is most treatable. The implementation of routine screening mammography has been associated with a decline in breast cancer mortality rates, particularly in women aged 50 to 69, who are encouraged to have regular screenings [32] [33].

Health organizations worldwide, including the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), provide guidelines to optimize the effectiveness of breast cancer screening. The ACS recommends that women with an average risk of breast cancer begin annual mammogram screenings at age 45, transitioning to biennial screenings at age 55. The USPSTF recommends biennial screenings starting at age 50 and continuing until age 74. Women at higher risk, such as those with a family history of breast cancer or genetic predispositions, are advised to start screening earlier and may consider additional imaging techniques such as MRI [34].

The age at which screening begins, the frequency of screenings, and the age at which it is appropriate to discontinue screening have been subjects of ongoing research and debate. However, the overarching consensus is that regular screening significantly contributes to breast cancer detection and treatment success.

Numerous studies and statistics illustrate the impact of screening programs on breast cancer detection and mortality rates. According to the American Cancer Society's 2020 report, the five-year relative survival rate for localized breast cancer—when the disease is confined to the breast—is 99%. Yet, when breast cancer metastasizes, this rate decreases significantly, emphasizing the critical role of early detection through screening [35].

A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2016 examined the effects of mammography screening over a 30-year period. The study revealed that the introduction of screening mammography was associated with a 40% reduction in breast cancer mortality among screened women, translating to lives saved at a national level. Furthermore, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) estimates that screening mammography has contributed to a nearly 50% decrease in breast cancer mortality since the 1990s [36].

In addition to mortality rates, screening programs also influence the stage at which breast cancer is detected. Data indicates that since the widespread adoption of mammography, there has been an uptick in the diagnosis of early-stage breast cancers (stage I or II), as opposed to late-stage diagnoses (stage III or IV). This shift suggests that screening empowers healthcare systems to catch the disease sooner, enabling timely and often less aggressive treatment options, ultimately improving patient outcomes [36].

While the effectiveness of breast cancer screening is well-established, the programs are not without their challenges and criticisms. Overdiagnosis is a significant concern associated with mammography. Some identified cancers may never progress to a life-threatening stage, leading to unnecessary anxiety, treatments, and medical costs. The balance between the benefits of early detection and the risks associated with overdiagnosis remains an important debate in the field [37].

Additionally, disparities in access to screening programs can affect their overall effectiveness. Socioeconomic factors, geographic locations, and variations in healthcare policies can lead to unequal access to mammography and other screening services. Studies indicate that women from lower-income backgrounds or those living in rural areas are less likely to receive timely screenings, ultimately contributing to worse outcomes in these populations [37].

### **Role of Healthcare Providers in Promoting Screening Initiatives:**

Breast cancer remains a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among women worldwide, prompting significant public health efforts aimed at prevention, early detection, and effective treatment. One of the pivotal strategies in combating breast cancer is the promotion of screening initiatives. Health care providers play an essential role in facilitating these initiatives, serving as a bridge between public health guidelines and patient care [38].

Breast cancer screening refers to the routine practices designed to detect breast cancer in asymptomatic women, primarily through mammography, clinical breast examinations (CBEs), and breast self-examinations (BSEs). These initiatives are crucial because early detection significantly increases the chances of successful treatment and survival rates. Reports indicate that mammography can reduce breast cancer mortality by up to 30% in women ages 40 to 74. Therefore, the role of health care providers in promoting these screening practices cannot be underestimated [39].

One of the primary roles of health care providers in promoting breast cancer screening is education. Effective communication about the importance of these screening methods can empower patients to take charge of their health. Providers can engage in educational outreach through a variety of channels, such as one-on-one consultations, community health workshops, and informational materials distributed in clinics. These educational efforts inform patients about the age and frequency at which screenings should be performed, potential risk factors, and the latest advancements in screening technology [40].

Moreover, providers must address prevalent misconceptions surrounding breast cancer screening. For instance, some individuals believe that screening is unnecessary if they exhibit no symptoms or if they do not have a family history of breast cancer. Health care providers can dispel these myths by emphasizing the importance of regular screenings for women regardless of their perceived risk, thus encouraging a proactive approach to health care [41].

Health care providers also play a vital role in personalized risk assessment, which is essential for encouraging optimal screening practices. By understanding individual risk factors—including age, family history, genetic predispositions, and lifestyle choices—health care providers can offer tailored recommendations and establish screening schedules that suit each patient's unique profile. This personalized approach not only enhances the likelihood of adherence to screening recommendations but fosters a deeper patient-provider relationship built on trust and understanding [42].

Accessibility is another critical aspect of breast cancer screening promotion. Health care providers can influence policy by advocating for public health policies that improve access to screening services. This includes working with health care systems to reduce financial barriers, such as ensuring insurance coverage for screening procedures and providing resources for low-income populations [43].

Moreover, health care providers can initiate community partnerships that facilitate mobile screening programs. These initiatives can target underserved areas, increasing detection rates among populations that may otherwise be neglected. Local clinics and community health organizations often collaborate with larger hospitals to provide outreach services, thereby extending the reach of breast cancer screening initiatives [44].

In addition to educating and assessing individual risk, health care providers must create a supportive environment that encourages patients to participate in screening programs. This involves fostering open communication where patients feel comfortable discussing their concerns about screenings and potential outcomes. For instance, providers

can address anxieties regarding procedures, such as discomfort during mammography, and outline what patients can expect during the screening process [45].

Additionally, employing motivational interviewing techniques can be effective in overcoming resistance to screening. Providers can help patients articulate their values and concerns, guiding them toward making informed decisions about their health care choices. By validating patients' feelings and providing scientific knowledge, health care providers enhance patients' motivation to adhere to screening recommendations [46].

Once a screening has taken place, the role of health care providers extends into follow-up care and continuous support. Effective communication of results, whether negative or positive, is crucial. Health care providers must ensure that patients understand their results and the next steps in either case. For those who receive abnormal findings, timely referrals for further evaluation and treatment are imperative [47].

Moreover, ongoing support from providers can help create a culture of regular screening. Encouraging patients to schedule their next screening during follow-up visits, using reminders, and providing continuous information about breast health can sustain awareness and commitment [48].

### **Recommendations for Enhancing Screening Accessibility and Outreach:**

Breast cancer remains one of the most prevalent forms of cancer globally, affecting millions of women (and men, albeit to a lesser extent) each year. Early detection through screening is crucial for improving survival rates and reducing mortality associated with this disease. However, barriers such as geographic location, socioeconomic status, healthcare literacy, and cultural stigma often hinder access to screening services [49].

Awareness is the first step in encouraging breast cancer screening. Public health campaigns that educate individuals about the importance of early detection and routine screenings can significantly increase participation rates. Such campaigns should be designed to reach diverse communities and should incorporate culturally relevant messages. For instance, using local languages, culturally appropriate visuals, and relatable narratives can help make the information more accessible. Moreover, social media platforms can be beneficial in reaching younger audiences, who can be crucial in sharing information within their networks [50].

Community health workers (CHWs) and peer educators can play an invaluable role in enhancing breast cancer awareness and facilitating access to screening. These individuals are often part of the communities they serve and can bridge the gap between healthcare providers and patients. By training CHWs to provide education about the risks, signs, and symptoms of breast cancer, communities can empower individuals to take charge of their health. Furthermore, peer educators can share personal stories, which can resonate deeply and motivate individuals to participate in screening programs [51].

Physical barriers to breast cancer screenings, such as transportation issues and the distance to healthcare facilities, significantly impede access. To counter this, healthcare organizations can explore mobile screening units that travel to underserved areas. These units can provide mammograms and breast exams on-site, eliminating the need for long journeys to distant facilities. Additionally, partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community centers can facilitate temporary clinics that offer screenings and educational resources [52].

Financial constraints can deter individuals from pursuing necessary breast cancer screenings. Many insurance plans do not cover certain screening types or have high copays that can be prohibitive for lower-income individuals. To enhance access, governments and NGOs can implement subsidy programs that cover the costs of screenings for uninsured or underinsured populations. Additionally, public health funding can be directed toward community health clinics that provide free or low-cost services, making screenings accessible for all socio-economic groups [53].

Improving healthcare literacy goes beyond patient education; healthcare providers also require training to effectively inform and encourage their patients regarding breast cancer screening. Continuing education programs should be developed to keep medical professionals up to date on the current guidelines for screening, risk assessments, and culturally competent communication practices. An informed provider is better equipped to address concerns, answer questions, and advocate for the importance of regular screenings [54].

The proliferation of technology can be harnessed to enhance awareness and access to breast cancer screening services. Telemedicine, for instance, allows patients to consult healthcare professionals remotely, enabling them to discuss their concerns and receive guidance on screenings without needing to visit a facility. Furthermore, health information apps can send reminders for screenings, provide educational material about breast health, and help users track their breast self-exams [55].

Legislation plays a critical role in establishing a framework that supports breast cancer screening initiatives. Governments and policymakers should advocate for laws that mandate insurance coverage for breast cancer screenings, including mammograms, without cost-sharing. Furthermore, policies should be created to eliminate barriers for high-risk populations, ensuring equitable access to screening and treatment. Advocacy efforts should

also focus on funding research to understand better the socio-economic and cultural barriers to screening in various communities [56].

Creating a multi-sectoral approach to breast cancer awareness and screening can yield significant benefits. This involves coordination among healthcare facilities, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and local government agencies. Collaborative efforts can lead to the pooling of resources for joint campaigns, shared knowledge, and a unified message that emphasizes the importance of breast cancer screenings. Additionally, such partnerships can lead to innovative solutions tailored to specific community needs [57].

#### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, public screening for breast cancer in primary healthcare centers in Saudi Arabia is a vital initiative that addresses a significant public health challenge. The findings of this study underscore the necessity of raising awareness and promoting early detection among women, as this can significantly reduce breast cancer morbidity and mortality rates. Effective implementation of screening programs, alongside culturally sensitive outreach efforts, is essential for maximizing participation, especially in underserved communities.

Moreover, the role of healthcare providers is crucial in fostering an environment that encourages women to engage in regular screenings and seek timely medical advice. By addressing barriers to access and enhancing educational initiatives, Saudi Arabia can improve its breast cancer detection and treatment outcomes. As part of ongoing health policy efforts, it is recommended that future strategies incorporate community feedback, incorporate innovative technologies for outreach, and ensure sustained funding for public health initiatives. This comprehensive approach will contribute to building a robust framework for breast cancer prevention and management in the Kingdom, ultimately saving lives and improving women's health.

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