

Male Breast Cancer

Examining gender disparity in diagnosis and treatment

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BACKGROUND: Although men make up a small percentage of those diagnosed with breast cancer, they are usually diagnosed at a later stage than women, increasing their chance of mortality. The reasons for this gender disparity require additional study.

OBJECTIVES: This article examines current literature on male breast cancer, including reasons for the gender disparity and interventions that may help to address it.

METHODS: An integrative review was conducted, and 12 studies were selected for inclusion.

FINDINGS: Study consensus is that male breast cancer is an underresearched subject and that increased research efforts may improve outcomes. In addition, interventions could help to decrease the gender disparity in breast cancer detection.

KEYWORDS

breast cancer; male breast cancer; gender disparity; interventions; treatment; diagnosis

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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ABOUT 2,550 MEN WILL BE DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER in 2018, and about 480 men will die from the disease that same year (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2018). Although men account for less than 1% of breast cancer cases in the United States, they are more likely than women to be diagnosed with advanced stage breast cancer (ACS, 2017b). Breast cancer that is found early, and that is small and has not yet spread, is typically easier to treat successfully than breast cancer discovered at a later stage (ACS, 2017a). In addition, a diagnosis of advanced stage breast cancer may warrant more intense and aggressive treatment, as well as an increase in expense for treatment (Ottini et al., 2010). Overall, the mortality rates for men and women diagnosed with breast cancer are similar, but men are generally diagnosed at a later stage than women, and, consequently, they often live for a shorter length of time after being diagnosed (American Society of Clinical Oncology [ASCO], 2018).

In addition, the rate of breast cancer diagnosis in men has increased, jumping 26% from 1973–1998 (Rudlowski, 2008), and racial disparities among men diagnosed with breast cancer exist. Black men have the highest incidence rates of breast cancer, with 2.7 of every 100,000 men being diagnosed with the disease, followed by White men, with an incidence rate of 1.9 of every 100,000 men (ASCO, 2018). Although male breast cancer cases constitute about 1% of the total population of patients with breast cancer, men face a significant risk because they are generally diagnosed at a later stage than women. Education for the general population and healthcare professionals, coupled with early detection and treatment plans targeted toward men, may decrease the gender disparity in breast cancer (Al-Haddad, 2010). This integrative review will examine research from 2000–2016 on male breast cancer that investigates the gender disparity that exists at the time of initial detection (i.e., men are generally diagnosed with breast cancer at a later stage than women), as well as possible reasons for and interventions to minimize this disparity.

Methods

Search Strategy and Operation Process

PubMed, PsycINFO®, CINAHL®, and Sociological Abstracts were searched for literature published from 2000–2016 using the following keywords: *male*, *breast cancer*, and *staging*. Studies were included in the review if they were peer-reviewed and met the following criteria:

- Involved male patients with breast cancer aged older than 18 years
- Noted possible reasons for the gender disparity in breast cancer (either based on data or not)
- Suggested nursing interventions (either based on data or not)
- Were written in English