

Report on Breast Cancer Awareness Intervention

Date: October 21, 2023

Location: Windrush Millennium Centre, Manchester



For more information, contact Dr Sakinat Baiyewu on sakinat@cahn.org.uk

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INTENT

Overview of the Breast Cancer Awareness Intervention

The **Breast Cancer Awareness Intervention**, held on **October 21, 2023**, at the **Windrush Millennium Centre in Manchester**, was an impactful initiative focused on educating and empowering the community about breast cancer, particularly among the Black population. This event was crucial in addressing the heightened breast cancer mortality rates in this group, largely due to late diagnosis and prevailing myths and misconceptions surrounding the disease. Research has shown that Black women face significantly higher mortality rates from breast cancer compared to their White counterparts, despite having similar incidence rates. Studies, such as those by the American Cancer Society (2022), indicate that Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer. This alarming disparity is largely attributed to late diagnoses, which are often the result of socio-economic barriers and misinformation surrounding the disease.

According to Cancer Research UK (2023), late diagnosis is a critical factor contributing to higher mortality rates among Black women. The delay in seeking medical help can be traced to several misconceptions about breast cancer and inadequate access to healthcare services. For instance, many Black women believe that breast cancer is only treatable in its early stages or that it primarily affects older women. These myths prevent them from undergoing regular screenings or seeking early medical intervention, further exacerbating the problem (NHS, 2023).

The persistence of these myths and misconceptions plays a significant role in the reluctance to engage in early screening and detection practices, leading to poor survival outcomes. Education and awareness initiatives, particularly targeted at underrepresented groups, are essential in dispelling these myths and promoting early diagnosis, which significantly improves survival rates.

In summary, while breast cancer incidence rates may be similar across racial groups, the mortality rate among Black women is disproportionately higher due to late diagnoses and persistent myths surrounding the disease.

IMPLEMENTATION

Training Approach and Delivery:

CAHN leveraged the commemoration of World Breast Cancer Day to mobilise Black women, particularly those of African and Caribbean descent, to the Windrush Millennium Centre, Manchester. Baseline data was collected using a survey questionnaire to assess participants' knowledge and attitudes towards breast self-examination. The questionnaires also aimed to determine whether the participants were familiar with breast self-examination practices. This approach provided a clear understanding of the community's awareness and attitudes before engaging in further educational interventions.



Population

The population consisted of Black women of African and Caribbean descent, ranging in age from 18 to 66 years, with the oldest participant being 66. Among the attendees, two were breast cancer survivors, bringing invaluable personal experiences and insights to the session. This diverse group provided a rich context for discussions on breast health, early detection, and self-examination practices.

Training Session

The health liaison practitioner from CAHN led a highly engaging session, demonstrating the 10-step method of breast palpation using anatomically accurate mannequins. Each participant had the opportunity to practise the steps, taking turns in a relaxed and

enjoyable environment. To make the session more culturally accessible, a mix of Pidgin English was incorporated, creating a comfortable and inclusive atmosphere.

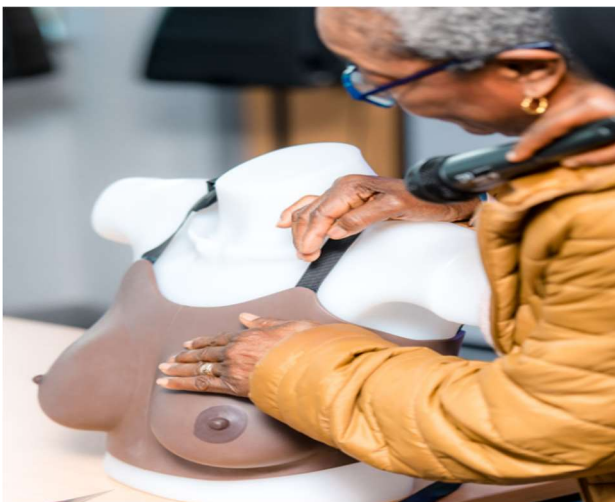
Training Resources

Synthetic plastic Breast models (Mannequins) were provided to all participating trainee for simulation of breast lump palpation. Each participant was able to replicate the texture and feel of real breast tissue through return demonstration. The mannequins included a range of dimensions of lumps and irregularities that could be encountered during a self-examination, allowing for realistic practice.

Instructional Content: The session commenced with a comprehensive explanation of breast anatomy and the critical importance of regular self-examinations. Visual aids and 78 different pictorial illustrations and diagrams were utilised to reinforce understanding.

Step-by-Step Guidance: Participants were guided through a structured, step-by-step process on how to conduct an effective breast self-examination. The training covered:

- **Visual Inspection:** Techniques for observing any changes in breast shape, size, or skin texture.
- **Palpation Methods:** Instructions on how to detect unusual lumps or masses through touch.
- **Timing and Frequency:** Advice on when and how often to perform self-examinations for the best outcomes.



IMPACT

Trainees' Feedback (Qualitative)

The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Below is thematic feedback of some of the key takeaways shared by the trainees through a post-training survey:

Appreciation for Practical Learning: Many participants expressed that the hands-on approach was incredibly beneficial. They felt that practising on the mannequins provided a realistic and safe way to learn the examination techniques. The use of simulated breast models significantly enhanced learning by allowing participants to develop confidence in identifying normal breast tissue and detecting unusual lumps or changes. This tactile experience bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, empowering attendees with essential skills for effective breast self-examination and early detection of potential health concerns.

Participant's Quote: *"I never knew how to properly check my breasts before today. The practical session made it so much clearer."*

Participant's Quote: *"At my age, I never knew I was at risk of developing Breast Cancer this much, today's event is an eye opener"*

Increased Confidence: The training significantly boosted participants' confidence in their ability to perform self-examinations. They appreciated the detailed instructions and the opportunity to practice under expert supervision.

Participant Quote: *"The hands-on training was incredibly useful and informative. I now feel confident in my ability to detect any abnormalities early."*

Awareness and Empowerment: Participants highlighted the importance of such training sessions in raising awareness about breast cancer and empowering women to take proactive steps in their health care.

Participant Quote: *"This session has empowered me to take charge of my breast health. I now understand the importance of regular self-examinations and feel equipped to perform them correctly."*

Trainees' Feedback (Quantitative)

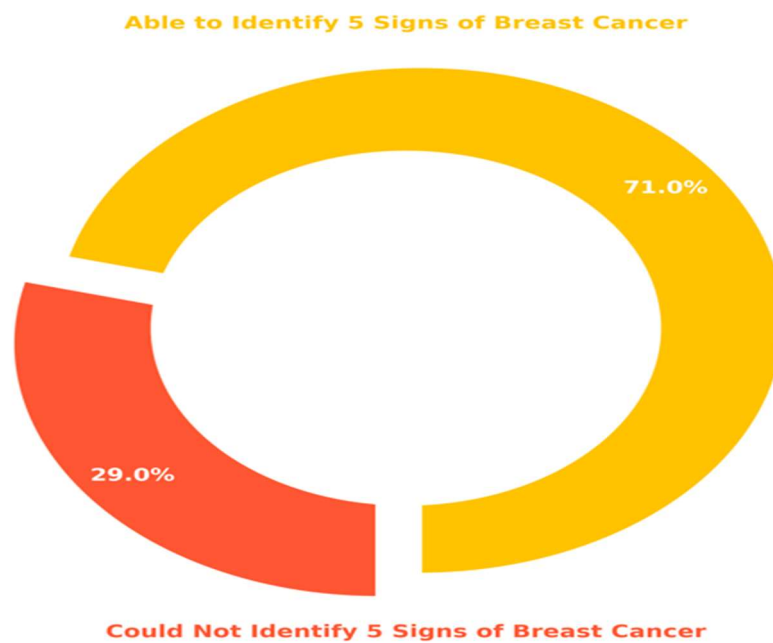
The intervention targeting breast self-examination (BSE) and breast cancer awareness among Black women in Manchester produced significant improvements in both knowledge and practical skills. The results can be broken down into the following key outcomes:

1. Improvement in Awareness:

Before the intervention, participants had limited knowledge of breast cancer signs and lacked confidence in conducting breast self-examinations. After the training:

- **71%** of participants could accurately identify at least five signs of breast cancer, compared to a much lower baseline in the pre-assessment.

Participants Identifying 5 Signs of Breast Cancer

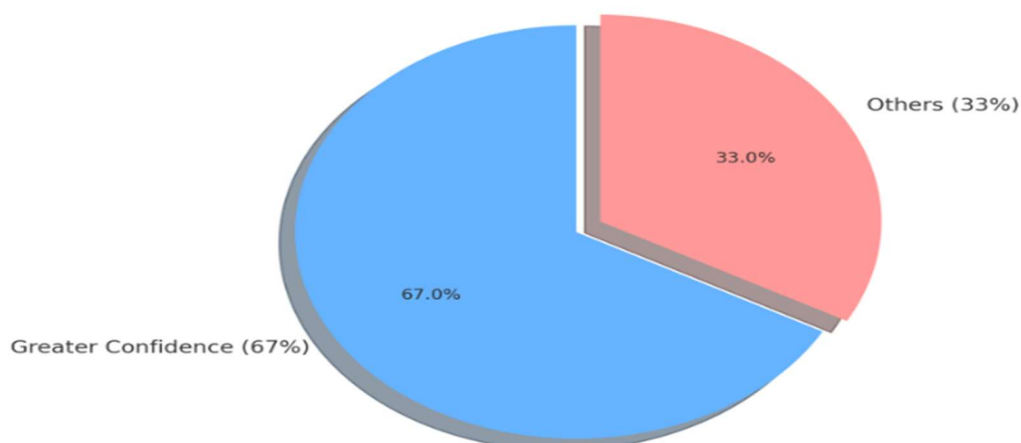


This increase highlights the success of the educational component in boosting awareness of breast cancer's early symptoms.

2. Increase in Confidence for Self-Examination:

- **67%** of participants expressed greater confidence in performing breast self-examinations after the training.

Participants Confidence in Breast Self-Examinations After Training



- The hands-on practical session, which used mannequins to simulate breast tissue, was particularly effective in helping participants understand the proper techniques for self-examination.
- Participants indicated that practicing with realistic models significantly enhanced their ability to detect lumps and other irregularities during a self-exam.



Conclusion

The Breast Cancer Awareness intervention, successfully met its objectives of educating participants about breast cancer and promoting early detection practices. The combination of educational content and practical training provided a comprehensive understanding of breast health, empowering attendees with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform self-examinations and ensure proper bra fitting. The positive feedback from participants underscores the event's impact and the need for continued awareness efforts.

Recommendations for Policy, Practice, Research, and Future Events

Policy Recommendations

- **National Breast Health Education Policy:** Develop and implement a national policy focused on breast health education tailored to underrepresented communities, particularly Black women. This policy should mandate the integration of culturally sensitive breast cancer awareness campaigns across healthcare systems.

Practice Recommendations

- **Community-Based Awareness Campaigns:** Launch community outreach programmes that provide regular breast cancer education and self-examination demonstrations in familiar settings, such as churches, community centres, and cultural events.
- **Integration of Practical Training Tools:** Incorporate the use of anatomically accurate breast models in breast cancer awareness sessions to provide realistic and effective hands-on training.

Research Recommendations

- **Effectiveness of Simulation-Based Learning:** Expand research on the impact of simulation tools, like breast models, in enhancing self-examination practices and early detection across diverse communities.

Recommendations for Future Events

- **Regular Follow-Up Sessions:** Schedule periodic follow-up workshops to reinforce self-examination techniques, provide updates on breast health, and track participants' progress.
- **Broaden Outreach and Inclusivity:** Extend event invitations to a wider demographic, including younger women and men, to foster a comprehensive community approach to breast health awareness.
- **Resource Development and Distribution:** Provide attendees with culturally relevant educational resources and self-examination guides to sustain awareness beyond the event.
- **Collaborative Multi-Organisational Events:** Partner with healthcare providers, local authorities, and advocacy groups to expand the reach and impact of the awareness campaigns.
- **Integration of Mental Health Support:** Incorporate mental health professionals in future events to address the emotional impact of breast cancer diagnoses and foster holistic health support.
- **Technology-Driven Engagement:** Use mobile health apps, SMS reminders, and social media campaigns to continuously engage participants and encourage routine self-examinations.

Call to Action

To combat the alarming breast cancer disparities among Black women, it is imperative for policymakers, healthcare practitioners, researchers, and community leaders to unite in implementing these recommendations. By advancing policies that prioritise equitable healthcare access, enhancing culturally sensitive practices, and investing in targeted research, we can significantly reduce breast cancer mortality rates and empower Black women to take control of their health.

For more information about this intervention, please reach out to:
Sakinat Baiyewu (Sakinat@cahn.org.uk) or June Green (June@cahn.org.uk)

Ancillary Provisions: Bra Fitting Session



Description: Concurrently, during the training break-out session, a bra fitting sub-session was conducted where women took turns measuring their bra sizes.

Feedback: The session helped attendees understand the importance of wearing properly fitted bras, which can impact breast health.

Participant Feedback

Participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the event, particularly highlighting the practical sessions.

Comments included:

- "I never knew how to properly check my breasts before today."
- "The hands-on training was incredibly useful and informative."

- "The bra fitting session was an eye-opener; I realised I had been wearing the wrong size."

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References:

American Cancer Society (2022) 'Breast cancer disparities in Black women', *American Cancer Society*. Available at: <https://www.cancer.org/research/acs-research-updates/breast-cancer/breast-cancer-disparities-in-black-women.html> (Accessed: 15 September 2024).

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