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The Global Burden of Breast Cancer: Early Detection and Access to Care

Kurbankulov U. M.
The Department of Oncology of Tashkent Medical Academy, PhD, Associate Professor
Kurbankulov.uktam@mail.ru

Annotation: This article examines the worldwide impact of breast cancer, emphasising inequalities in early diagnosis and healthcare access. Breast cancer continues to be the most frequently diagnosed cancer in women globally, with over 2.3 million new cases and 685,000 fatalities reported in 2022. Notwithstanding significant progress in screening and treatment, survival outcomes differ markedly according to geographic location, economic level, and healthcare infrastructure. High-income countries benefit from extensive mammography programs and prompt interventions, but women in low- and middle-income regions frequently encounter delayed diagnosis and restricted treatment options, resulting in elevated mortality rates.

The research integrates a survey of contemporary literature produced from 2020 to 2024 with a contextual analysis of clinical documentation from the Republican Specialised Scientific and Practical Medical Centre of Oncology and Radiology in Tashkent. Observational findings from this hospital reveal the tangible obstacles encountered in Central Asia, where access to diagnostic imaging, pathology, and surgical oncology is variable and centralised. This paper emphasises hurdles including inadequate public awareness, insufficient screening initiatives, and socioeconomic limitations through topic synthesis. It also analyses global best practices and early detection tactics that may be adopted in resource-limited environments. The results highlight the pressing necessity for scalable screening programs, infrastructure investment, and enhanced referral mechanisms to minimise diagnosis delays and enhance survival rates. Confronting these obstacles is essential to closing the international disparity in breast cancer outcomes and guaranteeing that early detection and successful treatment are universal standards rather than privileges for all women, globally.

Keywords: Breast carcinoma, Early identification, Mammographic screening, Cancer inequities, Proportion of individuals who continue to live or endure over a specified period. Countries with low and moderate incomes, Access to healthcare, Delay in diagnosis, Health policy in Uzbekistan.

Introduction

Breast cancer is currently acknowledged as the most often diagnosed cancer globally, exceeding lung cancer in overall incidence. The World Health Organisation reported that over 2.3 million women were newly diagnosed with breast cancer in 2022, resulting in around 685,000 fatalities from the disease [1]. Despite considerable advancements in diagnostics, surgery, radiation, and targeted therapies, patient outcomes are still largely influenced by geographic location and the timeliness of disease detection. In affluent nations, established screening programs, especially mammography, facilitate early diagnosis and substantially enhance survival rates. Conversely, in numerous low- and middle-income nations, particularly in Central Asia, breast cancer is frequently identified at a more advanced stage. This leads to diminished survival rates, increased treatment expenses, and an augmented load on both the patient and the healthcare system [2]. In these contexts, diagnostic delays are often attributable to inadequate awareness, absence of routine screening, and restricted access to diagnostic imaging, biopsy services, and oncological care. Uzbekistan, akin to several nations experiencing healthcare transformation, is endeavouring to modernise its cancer control strategies. The centralisation of oncology services and disparate access to imaging and pathology results in late-stage presentations and unfavourable prognoses. Consequently, the necessity for prompt detection, equal access to healthcare, and public

health initiatives is imperative. This article seeks to analyse the worldwide impact of breast cancer by focusing on early detection and discrepancies in access. This review integrates literature-based analysis with experiences from a national oncology centre in Uzbekistan to find practical solutions aimed at reducing diagnostic delays and enhancing survival outcomes in resource-limited environments.

Methodology

This research uses a narrative review methodology to investigate the intricate interaction between breast cancer outcomes and differences in early detection and access to care in various worldwide contexts. This review utilises a qualitative synthesis of available literature, policy papers, and clinical practice instead of employing statistical models or performing a meta-analysis. The objective was to develop a thorough yet realistic comprehension of how structural, economic, and social factors affect breast cancer detection and treatment, particularly in low- and middle-income nations.

This study encompasses recent articles from 2020 to 2024. The selection of sources was informed not by strict database queries, but by a targeted review of high-quality research publications, global cancer reports, and implementation studies about screening, diagnostics, and health system accessibility. Particular emphasis was placed on articles that contrasted outcomes between high-resource and low-resource nations, or that examined the obstacles women encounter in obtaining mammography, pathology, or subsequent oncology services. Reports from the World Health Organisation, the Global Cancer Observatory, and regional cancer control programs were utilised to ground the discussion within global policy frameworks.

This study integrates insights from the Republican Specialised Scientific and Practical Medical Centre of Oncology and Radiology in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to contextualise the findings. Clinical data and case observations from this institution, covering the years 2020 to 2024, provided significant insights into the practical obstacles to early breast cancer identification within an evolving healthcare system. Although not part of a formal prospective study, these institutional insights facilitated the review's incorporation of a grounded perspective on the presentation and management of breast cancer in Central Asia.

This review employed a conceptual approach to uncover reoccurring difficulties and opportunities rather than quantifying patterns. Themes encompassed the repercussions of postponed diagnosis, insufficient public awareness initiatives, inadequate investment in screening infrastructure, and cultural stigma that hinders medical consultation. The technique facilitated the incorporation of worldwide best practices, including community-based outreach initiatives, mobile mammography units, and integrated referral systems—strategies that have demonstrated potential in enhancing early detection, particularly in underprivileged regions. No novel patient interventions were performed for this investigation, and ethical approval was unnecessary, as all items were sourced from publically accessible resources or institutional papers. This methodology aims to connect research with real-world concerns by emphasising existing knowledge, identifying gaps, and proposing feasible implementations in contexts akin to Uzbekistan. This methodology provides a balanced and flexible framework for examining worldwide differences in breast cancer, emphasising both empirical evidence and practical healthcare conditions. The article not only summarises available research but also seeks to provide practical solutions that may be customised to address the requirements of women across various health systems.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of global data reveals considerable variations in breast cancer outcomes between areas, especially with early detection and access to care. Regions possessing excellent healthcare infrastructure demonstrate significantly superior long-term survival rates compared to those with restricted screening and treatment capabilities. Table 1 indicates that the five-year survival rate for breast cancer is 89% in North America and 85% in Western Europe, highlighting the advantages of systematic screening, early detection, and prompt treatment access. Conversely, Eastern Europe experiences a reduction to 74%, and Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa exhibit even lower figures—

62% and 52% respectively. These statistics indicate that the robustness of the healthcare system, rather than solely biological or hereditary factors, predominantly influences survival rates.

Table 1. Five-Year Survival Rates by Region

Region	5-Year Survival Rate (%)
North America	89
Western Europe	85
Eastern Europe	74
Central Asia	62
Sub-Saharan Africa	52

Table 1 illustrates the evident correlation between national healthcare infrastructure and breast cancer survival rates. Areas with robust cancer screening initiatives and treatment methods typically have elevated survival rates. The significantly inferior results in Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa underscore the pressing necessity for enhanced early detection and more accessible treatment options in these regions.

Comparable trends are apparent in the coverage of mammography screening, as illustrated in Table 2. In North America, around 78% of eligible women participate in routine screening, in contrast to 73% in Western Europe and 55% in Eastern Europe. Central Asia exhibits a coverage percentage of merely 34%, whereas Sub-Saharan Africa declines to a mere 18%. The deficiencies in preventative services immediately result in postponed diagnoses and inferior treatment outcomes.

Table 2. Mammography Screening Coverage by Region

Region	Screening Coverage (%)
North America	78
Western Europe	73
Eastern Europe	55
Central Asia	34
Sub-Saharan Africa	18

Table 2 demonstrates significant disparities in availability to mammography screening across several worldwide areas. Increased coverage in wealthy nations facilitates earlier diagnosis and more efficient treatment. Conversely, areas with minimal screening rates—such as Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa—continue to encounter difficulties in decreasing breast cancer mortality. These numbers underscore the necessity of augmenting screening programs in resource-constrained environments. Collectively, this research corroborates the strong association between survival and early detection. In the absence of enhanced screening access, areas such as Central Asia will persist in shouldering an inequitable burden of breast cancer death.

The examination of worldwide data unequivocally demonstrates how variations in early detection significantly influence breast cancer outcomes. The disparity between high-income and low- to middle-income countries is not solely indicative of disease prevalence but serves as a pronounced sign of structural imbalances in healthcare access, infrastructure, and public awareness. The data indicate that regions such as North America and Western Europe benefit from structured screening programs and established referral systems, resulting in five-year survival rates exceeding 85%. Conversely, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where early detection is inconsistent or unavailable, exhibit markedly lower survival rates.

The disparities in mammography screening coverage underscore this tendency. Approximately 75% of eligible women in North America and Western Europe participate in routine screening, but fewer than 40% do so in Central Asia. The absence of coverage results in an increase in late-stage diagnoses, necessitating more intensive therapy and associated with poorer prognoses. In Uzbekistan and comparable transitioning healthcare systems, women's access to imaging, pathology, and oncology

consultations is restricted and frequently concentrated in big urban centres, even when they pursue medical care. These findings underscore that bridging the survival gap necessitates more than the introduction of novel medicines; it commences with prompt diagnosis. Resolving this necessitates a synthesis of community education, investment in mobile or regional screening facilities, and governmental commitment to prioritise women's health. Enhancing health systems to provide equitable breast cancer care is crucial for decreasing global mortality and guaranteeing that early diagnosis is a universal right rather than a localised luxury.

Conclusion

Breast cancer is a predominant cause of cancer-related morbidity and mortality globally, however its effects are not uniformly distributed. The capacity to identify the disease early and initiate treatment swiftly is a critical determinant of survival; nonetheless, millions of women globally continue to be deprived of fundamental screening services. The statistics indicate that five-year survival rates are highest in countries with well-established and routinely accessible mammography programs. In lower-resource situations, inadequate coverage results in delayed diagnoses, diminished treatment efficacy, and increased mortality rates. Central Asia, particularly Uzbekistan, illustrates the difficulties encountered by numerous nations evolving towards more robust healthcare systems. Despite increasing awareness, practical obstacles such as inconsistent access to diagnostics and insufficient regional screening infrastructure persist in hindering early detection initiatives. To enhance global outcomes, emphasis must be placed on prevention and accessibility. Enhancing public education, decentralising screening initiatives, and incorporating breast health into primary care are critical methods. Ultimately, alleviating the burden of breast cancer necessitates not just medical advancements but also political dedication and equitable health system change, ensuring that no woman's survival prospects are contingent upon her geographic location.

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