

**Title:** A qualitative study on the physical and psychological effects of breast cancer diagnosis and treatment on young women in Ghanaian

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## **Abstract**

**Introduction:** the incidence of breast cancer in young women in Ghana is on the ascendancy with its poor tumour characteristics and poor prognosis. Young women diagnosed with breast cancer are said to face challenges that interfere with their entire life which invariably affect their quality of life. **Research questions:** what are the physical and psychological effects of breast cancer on young Ghanaian women? **Design:** the study used a qualitative exploratory descriptive design to explore, describe and document the and acquired ethical clearance from the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, University of Ghana. **Sample:** twelve young women were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods and interviewed based on saturation. **Data collection and analysis:** Data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic and content analysis using Miles and Huberman's four steps approach. **Results: the ages of the participants ranged from 28 to 45 years.** Three main themes emerged: physical effects of breast cancer, effects of treatment on body image, and emotional effects of breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. The undesirable effects of breast cancer treatment restricted participants from performing daily activities of living. Participants felt they looked unattractive because they have lost their breasts and used pieces of rags as breast prostheses. Participants used different wigs to cover up for their

hair loss from chemotherapy. Emotionally, almost all the participants became unstable, cried, and felt depressed, upon being told their diagnosis. Denial, Displacement, and Anger characterised their reactions. A few of them felt they had brought disgrace to their families.

**Keywords:** Body image, Breast cancer, Ghana, Physical, and Psychological.