



# Awareness of Breast Cancer Risk Factors among Female Operating Room Students at Behbahan School of Medicine in 2023

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## ABSTRACT

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**Introduction:** Non-communicable diseases, including cancer, have become one of the major challenges in the healthcare system. Cancer is the leading public health issue in Iran, as in other countries. According to the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education, cancer is the third leading cause of death after cardiovascular diseases and accidents. Breast cancer (BC) is the most common malignancy among women worldwide, the second leading cause of cancer death among women, accounting for 28% of all cancers. The World Health Organization reported that in 2018, more than two million new cases of BC were registered globally. The number of new cases is expected to increase from 10 million to 15 million annually. Studies have shown that an effective way to prevent this disease is to enhance women's awareness of the risk factors associated with this type of cancer.

**Methods and Materials:** The target population of this descriptive-cross-sectional study was 68 female operating room students at Behbahan School of Medicine, who were included in the study using a census sampling method. The data collection tools entailed a demographic information questionnaire and a BC risk factors awareness questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were confirmed in an earlier study. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software version 23 and using descriptive and analytical statistics.

**Results:** 64 (94.1%) of the participants were single, and 4 (9.5%) were married, with a mean age of  $21.5 \pm 38.2$  years. Six (8.8%) of the participants reported a family history of BC. The mean awareness score of the students was 91.5 out of 9, which was in the moderate range, based on the questionnaire scoring. Among all participants, 60 (88.2%) expressed their willingness to learn about the risk factors for this disease. The results showed no significant association between marital status, family history of BC, willingness to learn about risk factors, and cancer anxiety with students' awareness level. The level of awareness of students admitted in 2023 was significantly higher than that of the students admitted in 1999.

**Conclusion and Discussion:** The findings of this study showed that the under study students have a moderate level of awareness about BC. It is expected that female students studying in medical universities, as educators of BC risk factors, will at least act at the level of their own families, and this requires appropriate education for students. The majority (88%) of the students participating in this study reported that they would like to receive more information about the risk factors associated with this disease.

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