



Impact of Patient Navigation on Breast Cancer Survival in a Kigali Public Oncology Unit: A Retrospective Cohort Analysis, 2002

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Abstract

Breast cancer is a leading cause of cancer mortality in Rwanda, where survival is often compromised by fragmented care pathways and barriers to timely treatment. Patient navigation programmes have been proposed to address such systemic challenges in oncology. This study aimed to analyse the impact of a patient navigation intervention on survival outcomes for breast cancer patients attending a public-sector oncology unit in Kigali. A retrospective cohort analysis was conducted using patient records. Patients diagnosed with breast cancer were divided into two cohorts: those who received support from a dedicated patient navigator and a historical control group who received standard care. Survival times from diagnosis were compared between the groups using appropriate statistical methods. Patients who received navigation support demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in survival. The navigated cohort had a median survival time that was 8.2 months longer than the control group. A higher proportion of navigated patients also completed their prescribed course of treatment. The integration of patient navigation within a public oncology unit in Rwanda was associated with improved survival outcomes for breast cancer patients. This suggests navigation can mitigate health system barriers in low-resource settings. Health policymakers should consider the formal integration and funding of patient navigation programmes within national cancer control plans. Further research should explore the cost-effectiveness of navigation and its applicability to other cancer types. Breast neoplasms, patient navigation, survival analysis, health services accessibility, Rwanda, oncology service, hospital This study provides empirical evidence from a low-resource setting on the survival benefit of patient navigation for breast cancer, contributing to the literature on practical interventions to improve cancer outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: *Breast Neoplasms, Patient Navigation, Survival Analysis, Rwanda, Retrospective Studies, Oncology Services, Sub-Saharan Africa*

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