

## Supportive care of patients with breast cancer: The role of the onco social worker with special reference to India

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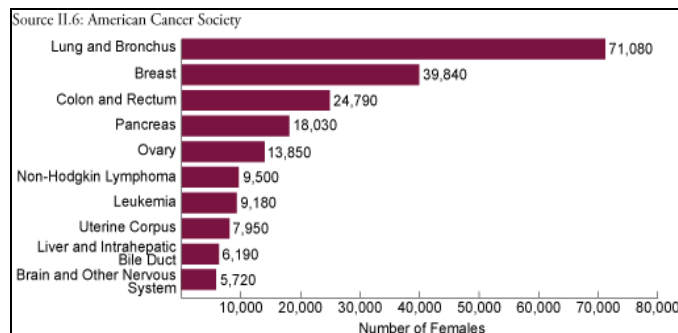
### Abstract

This study looks into the meaning of breast cancer and supportive care. It then reviews who onco social workers are, and the role played by them. Research is made using previous studies and finally conclusions made with new knowledge concerning the supportive care and role of onco social workers.

**Keywords:** breast cancer, social workers

### Introduction

“Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women” (Christina, 2017) [1]. It is the second leading cause of cancerous deaths among women, after lung cancer (HRSA, 2010).



**Fig 1:** leading Causes of Cancer deaths among females (All Ages), by Site, 2010 estimates

Cancer is a situation whereby there is an excessive growth of cells in the body. Breast cancer can be a ductal carcinoma, which is the most common and starts in the milk duct, or lobular carcinoma, which begins from the lobules. It can further be invasive or noninvasive. Invasive breast cancer is one, which the cells break out from the ducts, or lobules while non-invasive is one, which the cancer is still in the origin (Christina, 2017) [1]. Some of the symptoms of breast cancer include armpits pain, redness of breast skin, rash around nipples, sunken nipple, nipple discharge, change in breast size and shape, and peeling of breast skin.

Supportive care is care that is given to help relieve “symptoms caused by serious illnesses like cancer” (Society, 2017) [7, 8]. The main of such care is to make an ill patient feel comfortable. Oncology social workers are professionals who offer to counsel people affected by cancer. They also provide emotional support and aid in getting practical help (Ginny, 2015) [3]. Oncology social workers usually assist either individually or in support groups. An oncology social worker and breast cancer are so related hence a reasonable basis for a study finding more on the role of an oncology social worker in handling breast cancer.

### Literature Review

There are so many previous studies made concerning breast cancer. Research shows that cancer has become a fast-spreading non-communicable disease in low and middle-income countries. The problem is that these countries are not well equipped with the right personnel and equipment (Julia, et al., 2016). A group of researchers, on the other hand, emphasized on offering treatment-related toxicities, which offer supportive care. They claimed that this aspect might be overlooked in lower-middle-income countries (Fatima, et al., 2013). Another group gave a solution of making use “of primary care networks and community-based programs” (Patricia, et al., 2013) [7] to offer adequate support to breast cancer patients despite the shortage of personnel and equipment. When compared to China and the United states, WHO gave an analysis that India lost the largest number of people due to breast cancer (The Pink Initiative, 2015) as shown in the table below.

SOURCE: [HTTP://GLOBOCAN.IARC.FR](http://globoCAN.iarc.fr)

International Agency for Research on Cancer  
World Health Organization

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Year: 2012

Metric	Country	Count	ASR/P
C50 : Breast			
<u>Incidence - Female</u>	India	<u>144,937</u>	25.8
	United States of America	<u>232,714</u>	92.9
	China	<u>187,213</u>	22.1
<u>Mortality - Female</u>	India →	70,218	12.7
	United States of America →	43,909	14.9
	China →	47,984	5.4
Prevalence (5yr) - Female	India	396,991	92.6
	United States of America	970,693	753.7
	China	697,327	129.3

Fig 2

This mortality rate was because China is among the low and middle-income countries.

A study by Julie and David (2013) [6] is also conducted discussing how support for cancer patients can be developed India despite the fact that it is among the low and middle-income countries.

### Methods

The research method used in this study is qualitative. The reason for choosing this research method is because it gives an “understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations and provides insights into the problem” (Susan, 2011). Exploratory research designs are applied where research studies from other scholars are considered. An analysis is then made to come up with credible knowledge and conclusions. The limitation faced when collecting data is time. A very short time was available to do the research.

### Results and Findings

From all these studies, it is clear that there is the need for oncology support for breast cancer patients in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). It is an inadequate requirement, but efforts are being made to ensure it is available. Another factor is that as much as LMICs, India included, are not well

equipped for handling breast cancer. However, some strategies have been put in place to offer a solution to that; having primary care networks and community-based programs.

### Discussion

Supportive care for patients with breast cancer is critical. This kind of care is well offered by oncologist’s whole play other roles as well in dealing with cancer patients. There is evidence of inadequate equipment and personnel to handle these breast cancer issues. However, there are solutions to such situations. Coming up with community-based organizations that would play an equal role as an oncologist in offering supportive care.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Treatment of breast cancer is most effective if additional support such as counseling is added. There is only one recommendation; that India nationality should come up with community-based organizations to aid in offering supportive care to cancer patients.

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