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Socio economic status and the risk of breast cancer among Nigerian women

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Breast cancer incidence in Nigeria has risen by > 120% since 2010, while its mortality record (25.9 /100 000/year) ranks highest in Africa. Unfortunately, studies investigating breast cancer risk factors in the Africa are few and none of these studies was aimed at investigating the role of socioeconomic status (SES). High socioeconomic status has been implicated in developed countries. In Nigeria, though widespread poverty remain conspicuous in the general population, recent reports have suggested that the SES of many women has been improving over the past few decades. It is therefore the aim of this study to investigate whether there is any association between the socioeconomic status of Nigerian women and risk of breast cancer. The study was a hospital based case-control design involving 376 histologically confirmed breast cancer cases and 404 controls. The participants selected across five facilities in the north and southern Nigeria were interviewed in-person and appropriate measurements taken. Cases were selected mainly from the oncology wards while controls were mainly from the ophthalmology wards. Data analysis was based on logistic regression using SPSS. Socioeconomic status was measured based on the woman, her husband or family status where applicable. Contrary to expectations, significant protective association was obtained for women at the highest level of education (OR=0.323, 95%CI: 0.132-0.791), highest level of income (OR=0.448, 95%CI: 0.230-0.873), family income (OR=0.367, 95%CI: 0.192-0.705) compared to those at the lowest level. More so all measures of income showed independent significant association following adjustments for education and income. The findings strongly suggested that improving socioeconomic status of Nigerian women through improved access to higher education and higher income will provide a huge opportunity for breast cancer reduction in Nigeria and Africa.

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