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### Breaking the Silence Barrier: Opportunities to Address Breast Cancer in African-Born Women

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Women from Africa are a fast-growing population group in the United States; however, little is known about their breast cancer outcomes. There is minimal empirical data that describe the cancer practices, beliefs, and needs of African-born women. We conducted 2 focus groups with 20 African women to: (1) explore their knowledge and attitudes about breast cancer practices and (2) identify potential intervention targets. Women were primarily from the western region of Africa (eg, Nigeria, Ivory Coast), but there were representatives from the southern (eg, Zimbabwe) and eastern (eg, Ethiopia) regions as well. Their ages ranged from 21 to 60 years. Insurance coverage varied; 5 were uninsured. Findings indicated that women's knowledge and exposure to breast cancer prevention and screening were limited, and common explanations for breast cancer were that it is a boil or is a punishment from God. Barriers included limited knowledge, lack of insurance, spiritual beliefs, and secrecy. Suggestions for promoting breast health in this community included using culturally relevant materials and involving African men. Findings from this descriptive study provide useful insight to begin to understand the breast health experiences of African immigrant women. Additional research will be useful in developing culturally tailored breast cancer interventions.

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### Keywords

Africa; women's health; immigrants; breast cancer; knowledge; attitudes; and beliefs

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