

## Breast Cancer Focus Group Report

### Introduction

This report outlines the key discussions, observations, and feedback from a breast cancer awareness focus group session. The session aimed to educate participants on breast cancer, assess their existing knowledge, and address barriers to screening. Additionally, it sought to explore ways to improve engagement and accessibility to breast cancer screening services.

### Session Overview

The session began with an introduction to breast cancer awareness. Participants were shown a model of a breast and asked about their knowledge of breast cancer. This helped gauge their awareness and provided an opportunity to discuss common perceptions and misconceptions.

#### Key Discussion Points:

1. Awareness of Breast Cancer
  - Participants were asked if they had any prior knowledge of breast cancer.
  - They were encouraged to share their exposure to breast cancer awareness through television, media, or personal experiences.
  - A discussion followed about the importance of understanding breast cancer symptoms and early detection.
2. Understanding Mammograms
  - The group was introduced to mammograms, the machine used for breast cancer screening.
  - Participants were asked if they were familiar with the term “mammogram” and its purpose.
  - The significance of mammograms was explained, emphasizing their role in detecting potential health issues early.
3. Why Breast Cancer Screening is Important
  - Detection of health problems: Mammograms help identify any abnormalities in the breast tissue at an early stage.
  - Early diagnosis and treatment: Screening allows early detection, increasing the chances of successful treatment.

- Video presentation: A video was shown to reinforce the importance of mammograms, which gave participants confidence in the procedure and highlighted its effectiveness in detecting cancer early.
- Feedback on the video: Participants expressed appreciation for the video, stating that it made them feel more aware and less embarrassed about breast cancer screening.

#### 4. Quiz on Knowledge Sharing

- A quiz was conducted to assess participants' knowledge and encourage information sharing.
- The session led to a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of breast cancer screening.

#### Good Aspects of Screening:

- Protects lives by detecting cancer early.
- Reduces anxiety by providing peace of mind.
- Enables early detection, leading to better treatment outcomes.

#### Concerns and Barriers to Screening:

- Fear of radiation exposure.
- Feelings of embarrassment about the procedure.
- Anxiety and panic associated with screening.
- Discomfort and stress related to the process.

#### **Addressing Barriers to Screening**

To encourage participation in breast cancer screening programs, various barriers were discussed, along with strategies to overcome them:

1. Education and Awareness:
  - Explain the screening process in a way that reassures participants.
  - Provide clear information about what will happen during the screening.
2. Improving Accessibility:
  - Hospitals (e.g., NUH, Shrewsbury) should provide mobile screening vans to make the service more accessible.
  - Offer walk-in services to reduce scheduling challenges.

- Organize visits to screening centers to familiarize individuals with the process.
3. Enhancing Convenience:
- Increase awareness before the screening appointment to reduce anxiety.
  - Schedule appointments at easily accessible locations.
  - Provide transport options for those with mobility or travel issues.
4. Communication and Transparency:
- Inform participants in advance about what will happen during the screening.
  - Clarify the recommended screening age, which is between 30-40 years.

### **Challenges Identified**

During the discussion, several difficulties were highlighted that could hinder participation in screening programs:

1. Language Barriers
  - Some participants faced difficulties due to language differences.
  - The need for translation services was emphasized to ensure clear communication.
2. Staff Attitudes
  - It was noted that healthcare staff should exhibit patience and respect when dealing with individuals unfamiliar with the process.
  - Sensitivity training for medical professionals was suggested to make screenings more comfortable for patients.
3. Appointment Timing for Individuals with Learning Disabilities (LD)
  - Participants were informed that individuals with learning disabilities are given double the usual appointment time to accommodate their needs.

### **Key Takeaways from the Session**

At the end of the session, participants reflected on what they had learned:

- Increased awareness of what signs to check for in breast cancer.
- The importance of regular screening and self-examinations.
- The significance of designated screening months (e.g., summer) when more holidays allow people to schedule check-ups.

## **How to Share Information with the Community**

To improve outreach and ensure that as many people as possible are aware of breast cancer screening, the following strategies have been recommended:

### ***1. Sharing Information Through General Practitioners (GPs)***

- General practitioners (GPs) play a crucial role in patient education. Since they interact with individuals during routine check-ups, they are in an ideal position to provide information on breast cancer screening.
- This information should be shared during yearly health assessments to encourage patients to undergo screening and answer any questions they may have.

### ***2. Paper-Based Information***

- While digital resources are widely used, not everyone has access to smartphones or the internet. Printed materials ensure that essential information reaches a broader audience.
- Handouts, posters, and pamphlets should be distributed in healthcare facilities, community centers, and other relevant locations to provide clear and accessible information.

### ***3. Community Engagement***

- Organizing local events and informative sessions can help spread awareness and encourage community participation.
- Collaborating with local organizations, support groups, and community leaders can help reinforce the importance of breast cancer screening and ensure the message reaches diverse populations.

### ***4. Advertising in GP Practices***

- Placing posters and informational materials in GP waiting areas allows patients to learn about breast cancer screening while waiting for their appointments.
- These materials should include key details such as eligibility criteria, benefits of screening, and how to schedule an appointment.

### ***5. Flyers in Public Spaces***

- Distributing flyers at public locations such as libraries, supermarkets, community centers, and places of worship helps reach individuals who may not frequently visit healthcare facilities.
- These flyers should be designed to be visually appealing and easy to understand, with concise yet informative content about breast cancer screening services.

### **Conclusion**

The breast cancer focus group provided valuable insights into the level of awareness, barriers to screening, and potential solutions to improve participation. Key takeaways include the need for education, accessibility, and clear communication to encourage more individuals to undergo screening. Addressing concerns related to embarrassment, anxiety, and language barriers will play a crucial role in increasing engagement. Future efforts should focus on community outreach, staff training, and mobile screening options to ensure that breast cancer screening is accessible to all.