A Pathologic Study of Breast Diseases in a Nigerian Tertiary Center

Uchendu Obiora Jude1,2

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Breast diseases are relatively common. This paper addressed the age, gender and histology pattern of breast diseases encountered in a Nigerian apex hospital.

Material and methods: The study was a 70 months (1st January 2014-31st October 2019) descriptive retrospective study of breast specimens received at the histopathology department of Delta State University Teaching Hospital, Oghara, Nigeria. The age, sex, and corresponding histological diagnosis of these patients were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software version 22.0 (IBM, USA 2015). The statistical summary were subsequently presented in tables.

Results: A total of 416 specimens from 11 male and 389 female patients were analyzed. These specimens consist of 41 mastectomies, 96 tru-cut and 279 excision biopsies. The age range, mean age and peak age of the patients were 15-86 years, 40.8 years and fourth decade respectively. Inflammatory, benign neoplastic and malignant diseases accounted for 42(10.1%), 147(35.3%), and 227(54.6%) of the cases respectively, with corresponding mean ages of 43.47, 27.37 and 48.83 years, with mastitis, fibroadenoma and invasive ductal carcinoma- no special type IDC NST being the corresponding majority. The male breast diseases were gynecomastia (54.5%), invasive ductal carcinoma (36.4%) and mastitis (9.1%).

Conclusion: Inflammatory, benign neoplasms and malignant breast diseases occur at a ratio of 1:3:5:5.4 with mastitisitis, fibroadenoma and IDC NST being the corresponding most common disease and females are most often affected. The overall mean age was 40.8 years and the corresponding mean ages for inflammatory, benign and malignant diseases were 43.47, 27.37 and 48.83 years respectively. This information is vital for effective health intervention.

Keywords: Pathologic Study, Breast Diseases

INTRODUCTION

The breast is a very unique organ. While it is a rudimentary organ among males, it is for the female a source of nutrition for her infant and an emblem of identity, femininity, sexuality and beauty.1 Therefore anything that negatively affects the breast, has devastating psychological consequences to the individual.2 Breast diseases are numerous and vary according to its anatomic constituents (the ducts and lobules, the luminal and myoepithelial cells and the interlobular and intralobular stroma). Diseases of the breast also vary in line with the dynamic transition of breast through different phases of life (puberty, menstruation and ovulation cycles, pregnancy, and menopause). Consequently, breast diseases are relatively much more common and complex among females than among males.3

Breast diseases are commonly encountered in clinical and surgical pathology practice. Among these diseases, studies has shown that non-malignant breast diseases are far more common than malignant breast diseases with fibroadenoma and invasive ductal carcinoma being the leading examples of either groups.1,3 Cancer of the breast is a global concern as it is currently the most common malignancy among females worldwide,4 the leading cause of cancer mortality among African women,5 and the 2nd leading cause of cancer mortality among Caucasians(after lung cancer).3 Little is known about histologic pattern of breast diseases in Delta State, Nigeria. This study is the first of its kind and is based on surgical specimens received at Delta State University Teaching Hospital. Results of this study will contribute in advancing the knowledge and public awareness of the epidemiology of breast lesions in this region and provide data for necessary action by policy makers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This a descriptive retrospective study of all breast surgical specimens (Mastectomies, excision, incision and core needle biopsies) received at the department of Histopathology, DELSUTH for diagnostic evaluation. The study period was 70 months spanning from 1st January 2014 to 31st October 2019. The surgical Pathology specialists are relatively few in Delta State as a result of which the Histopathology department receives most surgical pathology specimens within the State, including specimens generated from hospitals of lower levels of care within and around the state. The study involved retrieval of all histopathology reports, and corresponding patient’s request forms, histopathology glass slides, and paraffin-embedded tissue block for accurate characterization where necessary.

Information utilized for this study includes the gender, age and histologic diagnosis. To avoid confusion, in bilateral breast lesions, each of both breasts is treated as a single entity. For same patient or a particular breast, complimenting mastectomy and tru-cut/excisional biopsy were treated as the same case and where contrasting diagnosis was observed, these were reconciled by looking at the materials earlier used.

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How to cite this article: Uchendu Obiora Jude. A pathologic study of breast diseases in a Nigerian tertiary center. International Journal of Contemporary Medical Research 2020;7(5):E1-E6.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21276/ijcmr.2020.7.5.10
in making diagnosis.

**Exclusion criteria**
Excluded from the studies are duplicates of surgical specimen for same patient, cases with inconclusive diagnosis, incomplete data and missing results. Together 15 surgical specimens did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Approval to conduct this research was granted by the committee on ethics for research of the Delta State University Teaching Hospital before the commencement of the study.

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**
Analysis was done using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software version 22.0 (IBM, USA 2015), and the result presented in tables.

**RESULTS**
During the study period, a total of 416 breast specimens were received accounting for 25.4% percent of all surgical samples received in the department. These consist of 16 bilateral and 384 unilateral breast diseases. Of these cases, there were 11 affected males and 404 affected females within the age range of 15-86 years, giving a male to female ratio of 1:36.7. In this study, the surgical specimens consist of 41 mastectomies, 96 tru-cut biopsies and 279 excisional biopsies account for 9.5%, 20.0% and 70.5% of the cases. This is shown in table I. The histologic pattern of the breast disease with gender distribution is shown in table II. Inflammatory lesions, benign neoplastic and malignant neoplastic lesions accounted for 42(10.1%), 147(35.3%), and 227(54.6%) cases giving a ratio of 1:3.5:5.4. These inflammatory lesions consist of mastitis (23[5.5%] cases), duct ectasia (14[3.4%] cases), fat necrosis (3[0.7%] cases) and epidermal inclusion cyst (2[0.5%] cases). Benign neoplastic diseases consist mainly of fibroadenoma (97[23.3%] cases), fibrocystic disease (17[4.1%] cases), tubular adenoma (7[1.7%] cases), gynecomastia (6[1.4%] cases), intraductal papilloma (5[1.2%] cases), atypical ductal hyperplasia (4[1.0%] cases), microglandular adenosis (3[0.7%] cases), benign phylloides (2[0.5%] cases), and sclerosing adenosis (2[0.5%] cases). Malignant diseases consist of mainly of IDC NST (202[48.6%] cases), Mucinous carcinoma (7[1.7%] cases) medullary carcinoma (4[1.0%] cases).

| Nature of specimen | No of cases | Percentage of cases |
|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Mastectomy        | 41          | 9.5                 |
| Tru-cut           | 96          | 20.0                |
| Excision          | 279         | 70.5                |
| Total no of surgical specimens | 416 | 100 |

Table-1: Nature of surgical specimens submitted for histologic diagnosis

| Histology group | Histologic type | No of cases (%) | Total no of cases |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| **Inflammatory disease** | | | |
| Duct ectasia    | 14(3.5)         | 14(3.4)         |
| Mastitis        | 22(5.4)         | 1(9.1)          |
| Fat necrosis    | 3(0.7)          | 3(0.7)          |
| Epidermal inclusion cyst | 2(0.5) | 2(0.5) |

| Benign neoplasm | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ADH             | 4(1.0)          | 4(1.0)          |
| Benign phylloides | 2(0.5) | 2(0.5) |
| Cystic change   | 1(0.3)          | 1(0.2)          |
| Fibroadenoma    | 97(24.0)        | 97(23.3)        |
| Fibrocystic disease | 17(4.2) | 17(4.1) |
| Galactoles      | 1(0.3)          | 1(0.2)          |
| Gynecomastia    | 6(54.6)         | 6(1.4)          |
| Intraductal papilloma | 5(1.2) | 5(1.2) |
| Lactating adenoma | 1(0.3) | 1(0.2) |
| Lipoma          | 1(0.3)          | 1(0.2)          |
| Microglandular adenosis | 3(0.7) | 3(0.7) |
| Sclerosing adenosis | 2(0.5) | 2(0.5) |
| Tubular adenoma | 7(1.7)          | 7(1.7)          |

| Malignant neoplasm | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| DCIS               | 3(0.7)          | 3(0.7)          |
| IDC NST            | 199(49.1)       | 4(36.4)         |
| LCIS               | 20(0.5)         | 2(0.5)          |
| Lobular carcinoma  | 2(0.5)          | 2(0.5)          |
| Mucinous carcinoma | 7(1.7)          | 7(1.7)          |
| Metaplastic carcinoma | 3(0.7) | 3(0.7) |
| Medullary carcinoma | 4(1.0)        | 4(1.0)          |
| Malignant Phylloides | 2(0.5) | 2(0.5) |
| NHL                | 1(0.3)          | 1(0.2)          |

| Total number of cases | 405(100) | 11(100) | 416(100) |

ADH (Atypical ductal hyperplasia); DCIS (Ductal carcinoma in situ); LCIS (Lobular carcinoma in situ); IDC NST (Invasive ductal carcinoma no special type); NHL (Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma)

Table-2: Distribution of histologic types of breast diseases
cases). Ductal carcinoma in-situ (3[0.7%]), Metaplastic cancer (3[0.7%] cases), Lobular carcinoma in-situ (2[0.5%] cases), lobular carcinoma (2[0.5%] cases), malignant phylloides (2[0.5%] cases) and Non-Hodgkin lymphoma (1[0.2%] case). Among the 11 breast lesions affecting males, we encountered 6 cases of gynecomastia, 4 cases of invasive ductal carcinomas and a case of mastitis.

The age distribution of the histologic types of breast disease is depicted in table III. The corresponding cases in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th decades were 32(7.7%), 72(17.3%), 89(21.4%), 74(17.8%), 40(9.6%), 13(3.1%) and 1(0.2%) cases respectively. Figure 1 shows Granulomatous mastitis in a 34 year-old female (X10). Plasmacytoid mononuclear...
high volume of breast diseases diagnosed in the hospitals is that the breast is an exposed organ, freely accessible to self-examination and disease surveillance. The gender distribution of breast disease in this study showed a biased female predominance which correlated well with other literatures. This is because the female breast has more cells than its male counterpart and unlike the male breast, its cells are continuously exposed to the growth-promoting influence of female sex hormones such as estrogen and progesterone. Inflammatory diseases accounted for 10% of breast diseases in this study. This is higher than 3.9% reported in both Uyo and Maiduguri and 4% reported in Lagos. Earlier studies among Caucasians has however shown that inflammatory disorders are rare, accounting for less than 1% of the cases. Inflammatory breast diseases are usually caused by infection, autoimmune diseases and foreign body reaction. The relatively higher rate of inflammatory breast disorders in our environment is probably related to poverty and poor hygiene, diseases of skin in the breast region and cases of inflammatory breast cancers that might have been erroneously diagnosed as inflammatory disease as a result of improper biopsy site selection. Benign neoplastic breast disease accounted for 35.3% of tumors of breast in this study which is lower than 51.8%, 66.3% and 74.5% reported in Uyo, Kano and Lagos respectively. Most breast diseases managed in the study center were referred cases from either private centers or lower level of care government hospitals. These centers were able to manage benign tumors and therefore unlikely to refer such patients to tertiary care center, culminating in biased referral of malignant cases to the study. The epidemiologic significance of some of these benign tumors lies in the risk of later developing into invasive cancer. These group of patients calls for continuous clinical and radiologic surveillance.

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In this analysis, breast lesion accounted for 25.5% of all surgical specimens. This is comparable to 26% observed by Nwafor and Keshinro in Lagos State but higher than 8.1%, 16% and 17.1%, Markurdi, Uyo and Maiduguri respectively. These facts substantiate that breast diseases account for a remarkable volume of pathologist and the surgeon’s workload, a reflection of the disease burden in our environment. Egwuonwu and co-workers had suggested that increased public awareness of breast cancer in Nigeria positively influenced health seeking behavior of patients with breast diseases. Another likely explanation for the

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reported that fibrocystic disease was the most common benign breast disease where it accounted for 42% of the cases.21

Malignant breast disease accounted for 52.2% of all breast surgical specimens in our study. As a referral center, the patients attended to are more likely to be the patients that other hospitals are uncomfortable with managing, accounting for the high rate of cancer in our study center. Further to this, inflammatory conditions encountered in the study center which responded well to antibiotics are less likely to considered for surgical examination. Together these factors may account for the high incidence of breast cancer, among breast diseases managed in the study center. There is however need for a population-based study in this region to ascertain the true incidence. The incidence in our report correlates well with 54.5% reported in both Nnewi and India,11,14 but is higher than the incidence observed in Ibadan, Ife, Calabar, Lagos, Kano, Ilorin, Maiduguri and and Makurdi with breast cancers accounting for 10.5-46% of the cases. 6,12,13, 15,22-25

The age range of patients with breast cancer was 28-86 years, which is in agreement with rarity of breast cancer before the age of 25 years in earlier investigations.3 A mean age of 48.8 years was observed among breast cancer patients in this analysis which correlates with the mean ages of 30.6-60.8 years (median 50.2 years), in other parts of Africa.26 Our report is however lower than the mean age of 56 years and 61 years for Hispanic and White women with breast cancer respectively.27 The difference may be attributed to our lower life expectancy at birth (54 years),27 cutting shot the age related peak at the age of 70-80 years for breast cancer seen in developed countries.3 The higher incidence of breast cancer among younger population in African population calls for concern and action by government to ensure routing screening using mammography, accurate and complete diagnosis and treatment using radiotherapy. This implies provision of more funds to the health sector. Ninety-nine point six percent of the cancers observed in this study were adenocarcinoma which concurs with earlier reports. IDC-NST was also the most common histologic type in this study, which correlates well with other studies. Rarity of breast diseases has been well documented among males in English literature. In this study, it accounted for 2.6% of all surgical specimen encountered. This observation is similar to 1%, 2.0%, 2.2% and 2.6% prevalence reported in Uyo,8 Makurdi,7 Lagos6 and Maiduguri9 respectively. Gynecomastia and invasive ductal carcinoma were the predominant diseases accounting for 54.6% and 36.4% of the cases respectively. This is similar to report in Ilorin where both disorders accounted for 93% of male breast diseases.28 but lower than 63% observed in Lagos.6 In this study, male breast cancer accounted for 2.5% of malignant breast diseases. This is similar to the 2.1%, 2.2%, 3.4% and 3.9% reported in Benin,13 Lagos,6 Ibadan15 and Ife13 respectively. Among western population incidence of male breast cancer is relatively lower, accounting for 1% of breast cancer.3

CONCLUSION

In sum, breast diseases constitute a significant proportion of surgical specimens in Delta State, Nigeria, with a male to female ratio is 1:36.7. Inflammatory lesions, benign tumour and malignant diseases occur at ratio of 1: 3.5: 5.4 respectively with mastitis, fibroadenoma and invasive ductal carcinoma being the corresponding most common variant. There in need for concerned policy makers to invest more in cancer care and cancer registry in this region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am highly indebted to the staff of Histopathology Department of Delta State University Teaching Hospital, Oghara, Delta State. Dr Madueke Chukudi of the department of Pathology, University of Benin Teaching Hospital took the pictures of the histology slides used in this work.

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Source of Support: Nil; Conflict of Interest: None
Submitted: 01-04-2020; Accepted: 22-04-2020; Published: 15-05-2020