

## **BREAST CANCER AWARENESS PODCAST**

### **Synopsis**

October is breast cancer awareness month, and this podcast episode will help raise awareness and break the stigma around breast cancer by educating the general public on the signs and symptoms, risk factors, and treatment of this disease. This episode will shed some light on important information regarding the most commonly diagnosed cancer amongst South-African women, and ways in which we can combat this deadly but treatable disease.

### **Introduction**

Welcome to KoviesCAST, podcasts that are designed to make you achieve academic success. This is brought to you by KoviesFM, a division of the University of The Free State student affairs in partnership with the center of teaching and learning. Today we are talking to Jessica van Onselen about breast cancer. Jessica is currently a student at the University of The Free State, Bloemfontein campus, where she is completing her Honours degree in Medical Physiology at the Department of Basic Medical Sciences. October is breast cancer awareness month and what better way to raise awareness than to actively discuss breast cancer, as well as answering some common questions the public might have.

### **Body**

**Q1: “Can you explain to us what exactly breast cancer is ?”**

A: Breast cancer is a disease in which abnormal cells of the breast grow at an uncontrollable rate. At first, the uncontrollable growth is only found in the breast tissue, but over time can spread to the surrounding tissue and other parts of the body. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed life-threatening cancer and the leading cause of cancer deaths, in South-African women.

**Q2: “Who is most at risk of developing breast cancer ?”**

A: Women are most at risk of developing breast cancer in their lifetime. People generally assume that only women can get breast cancer, but men can get breast cancer too.

**Q3 “How common is breast cancer in South-Africa?”**

A: Breast cancer is the most common cancer in South-African women of all races, with 1 in every 25 women at risk of getting breast cancer in their lifetime. Last year over 15,000 South African women were diagnosed, and over 5,000 women died from breast cancer.

**Q4: “Is there anything that makes you more at risk of getting breast cancer in your lifetime?”**

A: Other than your gender, your age is an important factor. Although you can get breast cancer at any age, the older you get the higher your chances are of getting breast cancer. Most breast cancers are diagnosed after the age of 50. Older women who are post-menopausal, or in other words do not get their period anymore, are also at an increased risk of developing breast cancer. It is important to remember that all women are at risk, but women that have relatives that have been diagnosed with breast cancer have a greater chance of developing breast cancer. Between 5 and 10% of all breast cancers are hereditary, which means it was passed on from your parents. Other risk factors include unhealthy lifestyles and eating habits. Although all of these factors make you more at risk there are things you can do from your side to prevent some of them.

**Q5: “What can be done to prevent some of these risks ?”**

A: Factors such as your age and gender you can't change, but the way you choose to live your life can. Some of these unhealthy lifestyle choices include your eating habits, exercise levels, smoking or drinking and your day to day health choices you make. If you drink alcohol or

smoke, it increases your risk if you drink too much or smoke. By simply not drinking too much or smoking, you can already lower your risk of getting breast cancer. Even by only drinking one alcoholic drink a day can increase your risk by of developing breast cancer up to 10% and increases with increased daily alcohol intake. Women who are overweight, not active, or don't exercise have a higher risk of getting breast cancer. Exercising and living an active lifestyle decreases your risk, for example, simply walking to the shop in your area instead of taking the taxi adds exercise into your day without trying. Exercising can also help you lose weight, which lowers your risk as well. Women who don't get enough sleep at night, which is between 7 and 9 hours, are also more at risk, therefore it is very important to get a good night's rest every night.

Unhealthy eating habits also increase your risk of getting breast cancer. It is very important to ensure that you eat balanced healthy meals. A balanced healthy meal includes portions of fruit, vegetables, and meat. One should avoid too many oil foods, sweets, and fizzy cool drinks.

**Q6: "What are the signs and symptoms associated with breast cancer?"**

A: Warning signs and symptoms of breast cancer differ from person to person, and just because you might have some of these symptoms, does not always mean you have breast cancer. It is, therefore, better to talk to your doctor about your symptoms. These warning signs include:

- New lumps in your breast or armpit
- Any change in the size or the shape of the breast, including swelling of the breast
- Redness, irritation, and dry flaky skin of breast skin or in the nipple area
- Dimpling or inversion of the nipple which means that the nipple pulled inward instead of facing outward.
- Liquids other than breast milk that is released from your nipples, for example, blood.
- Pain in any area of the breast.

**Q7: "What can a person do to look out for these signs and symptoms?"**

A: It is important to examine your breasts regularly. You can do this once a month in your own time in front of the mirror. You begin by looking at your breasts in the mirror with your shoulders straight and your arms on your hips to look for any warning signs mentioned before or any new changes to your breasts. Next, you raise your arms above your head and look for the same warning signs, as well as for any fluid coming out of one or both nipples. This can be a watery, milky, or yellow fluid, or blood. Next, you feel your breasts lying down. Using your right hand to feel your left breast and your left hand to feel your right breast, you must use pressure with the first few fingers to make small circular movements. You must do this with the entire breast from top to bottom and from side to side, as well as just above your breasts and under your arms. Now standing up or sitting, do the same motions as when you laid down.

A routine yearly mammogram at your doctor is also important. It is an X-ray, which is special picture, taken of the breast tissue to look for any signs of breast cancer that might not be visible or felt with a self-examination. This procedure is painless and done quickly.

**Q8:” What must you do if you find anything unusual?”**

A: Don’t panic when you feel or see anything unusual. It is not always a sign that you have breast cancer, where 90% of breast masses are not breast cancer. It is important to go to the doctor if these signs stay for more than 4-6 weeks. Make sure to explain exactly to your doctor what you found or what bothers you.

**Q9: “How can breast cancer be treated?”**

A: Although not always successful in destroying all of the cancer, treating breast cancer can make you live longer. Breast cancer has many treatment options and differs from person to person, depending on the patient’s needs. There has been a lot of progress in the treatment of breast cancer.

Treatment options may include:

- surgery, which aims to remove all or most of the cancer from the breast tissue.

- chemotherapy, a treatment that uses medicine to stop the growth of cancer cells either by destroying the cells or by stopping them from growing, and
- radiotherapy which uses high levels of energy to destroy or shrink the cancer cells.

**Q10: "What can our listeners do to support and help spread awareness on breast cancer?"**

A: You can do your part by educating your friends and family on what you learnt in today's podcast, or by encouraging them to listen to the podcast themselves or to learn about the topic themselves. You can also show your support by wearing a pink ribbon this month of October, to spread awareness on breast cancer

**Outro:**

For more information you can contact the Cancer Association of South Africa on 080022622 or the Pink drive on 0119988022 and discuss any of your concerns or questions you may have.