

# **Improving The Lives of Breast Cancer Survivors Through Clothes.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer found among women, second only to skin cancer. It is the leading type of cancer affecting women in Kenya. The most common surgical treatments for the disease are mastectomy and lumpectomy. These can cause changes to breast size, shape of the chest walls and overall torso symmetry. These changes imply that the breast cancer survivors (BCSs) may require entirely new attire. This study therefore aimed at determining the correct clothes designs for the breast cancer survivors. The objectives of the study were to determine the physical challenges faced by breast cancer survivors with respect to their clothing needs, and to assess the correct clothes design suitable for the breast cancer survivors 'changed body posture. The target population constituted breast cancer survivors discharged from the four cancer management hospitals in Nairobi (KNH, MP Shah, Nairobi and Aga Khan Hospitals), at least three months before this study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, and used purposive sampling to select four cancer treatment hospitals in Kenya. A total of 272 respondents were captured from their respective hospitals as they returned for checkup, and at the hospices where cancer survivors go for support. Questionnaire was the main data collection tool. Data of all categories was tabulated and descriptive statistics used to analyse quantitative data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. One of the main challenges was that breast cancer survivors experienced swelling of arms and hands, a condition that could be controlled by the use of lymphedema sleeve. This can be concealed by designing a long sleeved garment that covers the swollen areas, with an extra scarf prepared from the same material that the breast cancer survivor would use as the sleeve instead of using a sleeve of a different material. Since mastectomy changes the woman 's body configuration, leaving several scars therein, it is important that these scars be concealed with the right garment design that provides both comfort and concealment. Further studies should be considered to address the challenges facing breast cancer patients before treatment and move further to their clothing requirements after treatment