

# Women with breast cancer refuse surgery ...for fear of losing romantic relationship

By Jemima Esinam Kuatsinu & Theresa Dzifa Tsetse

**A** lecturer at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Ghana, Dr Merri Iddrisu, has revealed that many women hesitate to undergo surgery for breast cancer because of the fear that the removal of one or both breasts may alter their romantic relationships and affect how their partners perceive them.

However, she said the condition, though a difficult one, must not end one's romantic relationship and urged men to support women in this regard.

"Love does not end when the breast is gone. With understanding and support, couples can build an even

stronger bond," she emphasised.

She made the disclosure in an interview with *The Spectator* on the sidelines of the 25th anniversary annual symposium of the College of Health Sciences (CHS) held at the West African Genetic Medicine Centre (WAGMC), University of Ghana, Legon.

It was organised on the theme: 'from genes to generations: family heredity and breast cancer risk.'

Dr Iddrisu explained that the breast is not just a biological feature but a symbol of femininity, intimacy, and confidence, elements that shape a woman's sense of self within her marriage.

"When a woman loses her breast, she is not only fighting cancer but also dealing with the emotional pain of feeling incomplete or undesirable. Many fear their husbands will no longer see them attractive," she elaborated.

She noted that some women struggle with self-image and intimacy after mastectomy, leading

to strained relationships and emotional withdrawal.

"If the husband still finds his wife beautiful, even with scars, and continues to show affection, the woman becomes stronger emotionally. But when the husband distances himself, it deepens her pain," she added.

On that note, the expert stressed the need for men to be actively involved in their wives' treatment journey, as emotional and psychological supports from partners significantly impact recovery.

"When a woman is diagnosed, we must treat not just the woman but the entire family which includes the husband, children, and even colleagues. The husband especially needs guidance to understand the physical and emotional effects of treatment," she explained.

Moreover, she also encouraged couples to explore breast reconstruction or prosthetic options if needed, saying such steps can help restore confidence and intimacy.

According to her, open communication, acceptance, and counselling can help couples overcome the emotional hurdles that come with breast cancer treatment.



• Dr Merri Iddrisu (inset) speaking at the programme **Photo: Victor A. Buxton**

# 'Provide facilities for children with limb deformities'

By Linda Abrefi Wadie

**S**OME concerned parents of children living with limb deformities have called for an increase in trained teachers to enable schools to accommodate children with such disabilities.

They also appealed for the provision of facilities for such children in schools.

According to the concerned parents, despite the children's eagerness to learn, many are denied admission to schools due to their physical condition.

This came to light during a visit by a team of UK-based Orthopaedic Doctors and health personnel of the St. Joseph's Hospital in Koforidua last week.

Mr Daniel Kwame Okyere was one of the parents that shared his struggles with his 11-year-old daughter who was denied access to school due to her disability condition, with *The Spectator*.

"My daughter is very brilliant with lots of talents, but she's not being admitted because of her disability," he disclosed.

He said it is also difficult and

stressful accessing health care for these children with disabilities and appealed to government to establish more specialised orthopaedic hospitals in the country to ease the burden of parents.

According to Mr Okyere, currently parents were forced to travel long distances from towns like Tarkwa, Hohoe, Takoradi to seek treatment at St. Joseph's Hospital in Koforidua.

A prominent lady, who spoke on condition of anonymity, talked about the emotional toll on children with deformities, and said they are often teased and mocked by their peers.

She indicated that by the statistics of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), over 90 per cent of children with disabilities in low-income countries do not attend school.

"We are pleading with government for support and recognition to implement policies to prevent discrimination against children with disabilities who are normally referred to as 'special children,'" she stated.

Dr Paul Ofori-Atta, an Orthopaedic Trauma Consultant and the President of MOTEC LIFE-UK, NGO, advised parents to seek treatment from hospitals that specialise in specific conditions.

He said research has shown that identifying the right health facilities to seek early treatment helps the victims to live normal lives and reduces the burden on their parents.

The leader of the medical team,

Dr Sanyan Adedapo, a Consultant Orthopaedic surgeon, stated that the team's primary objective was to enable children with skeletal disorders or limb deformities walk normally and to also enjoy life.

He further revealed that MOTEC Life supports the project by raising funds for patient care, and that the medical team sponsors themselves for the exercise.



• Dr Ofori-Atta, seated-middle. Dr Adedapo, seated-first from right and the other medical team