



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## *News Release*

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### **Action on breast cancer could halt rise of disease in Africa**

Breast cancer cases in Africa could double in the next decade unless action is taken, a study has found.

Rates are likely to increase amid population growth, unhealthy lifestyles, poor health infrastructure and lack of education for women.

The trend could be halted if data collection and patient registration were improved, researchers suggest.

Poor funding, a shortage of skilled practitioners and lack of urgency on the part of governments are challenging the creation and function of registries across Africa, research showed.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 20 of the World Health Organization's 46 member states have active cancer registries – databases of affected patients.

These are poorly funded, hold limited national information and most fail to meet the standards required, researchers found.

Civil unrest in parts of Central Africa has also impacted the ability to capture information and identify cancer cases.

The study, by researchers at the University of Edinburgh, is the first review of publicly available evidence on female breast cancer in Africa.

Scientists examined a total of 41 studies across 22 African countries.

Cancer is a leading cause of illness and death among women around the world, accounting for approximately 17.5 million cancer cases and 9 million deaths in 2015.

Young African women are twice as likely to die from breast cancer than those in high-income countries.

Dr Kit Chan from the University of Edinburgh's Usher Institute of Population Health Sciences and Informatics led the study. She said: "The prevention and management of breast

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cancer in Africa requires immediate efforts to improve standardised cancer registration in order to calculate cancer incidence rates.

“Only then will we be able to determine if advanced stages of breast cancer in Africa could be linked to unique biological characteristics in populations and only then will we be able to halt breast cancer rates.”

For further information, please contact:

Andrew Moffat, Press and PR Office, Tel +44 131 650 9836, Email [andrew.moffat@ed.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.moffat@ed.ac.uk)