



## CoE-HUMAN NEWSLETTER

October 2024



### October - Breast Cancer Awareness month

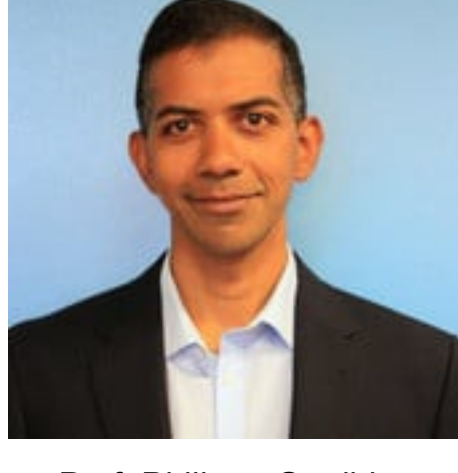


Breast Cancer Awareness Month is an annual global health campaign held in October to promote screening and prevention of the disease. The National Breast Cancer Foundation estimates that in 2024, more than 360,000 people will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Although this is undoubtedly concerning, treatments such as radiation, chemotherapy, and hormone therapy have shown to be effective over the years.

While the precise root cause of breast cancer remains unknown, various risk factors have been identified, such as obesity, lifestyle choices, family history, environmental factors, and personal history of breast cancer, and more. Below, we look at research conducted by CoE-HUMAN grantees that explore ways in which our lives are influenced by some of these risk factors.

### "Prevention is better than cure"

Physical activity vital sign assessment and associated health outcomes in an underserved South African community.



Prof. Philippe Gradidge

Living a healthy lifestyle, such as exercising, has been identified as a means of preventing cancer.

The physical activity vital sign (PAVS) was utilized in a study by Gradidge et al. (2014) to determine the amount of physical activity in a community in South Africa and find correlations between physical activity and important health outcomes.

This study was carried out in Soweto, a historically disadvantaged urban township in Johannesburg, South Africa. According to Hopkins et al. 2021, there is also a significant prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in this area, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and mental health issues. These comorbidities have an effect on the local community. Study participants were found during routine home- and community-based health screening campaigns. Between 30 September 2021 and 28 January 2022, CHWs conducted house-to-house health screening evaluations during a 4-month period. Community health workers gathered blood pressure measurements, self-reported medical histories, and PAVS data from 2282 participants—1161 women and 1121 men—for a cross-sectional study. Only 19.8% of the population reported meeting the criteria, with women reporting slightly lower rates (17.6%) than men (22.1%).

The PAVS questionnaire was completed by CHWs in about 29.5 seconds, which indicates that it is feasible to use the instrument as a component of a more comprehensive screening assessment. After looking into the reported levels of physical activity, we discovered that while the research population's overall percentage of participants met physical activity standards, it was low compared to global trends (Guthold et al. 2018). Last, we studied relationships between physical activity levels, socio-demographic parameters and cardio-metabolic risk factors. Replicating earlier findings using the PAVS tool, we found many significant relationships between levels of physical activity and cardio metabolic risk variables, including hypertension.

The authors conclude that the PAVS should be taken into consideration as a useful instrument for assessing physical activity levels in South African areas that are underprivileged. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-024-02292-1>

### "We are just not sure what that means or if it's relevant": Uncertainty when gathering family history information in South African prenatal genetic counselling consultations



Dr. Megan Scott

A person's chance of developing cancer, such as breast, ovarian, colorectal, and prostate cancers, may be increased if they have a family history of the disease (Eberl et al., 2005).

In order to investigate the effect of uncertainty on the process of obtaining family history information, Scott et al. (2024) utilized a qualitative sociolinguistic approach to analyze 9 video-recorded prenatal GC consultations in South Africa.

Convenience sampling was used in the study to gather information from first-time and follow-up GC consultations. The majority of patients were people of Mixed Ancestry or Black African descent, first-language speakers of Afrikaans and IsiXhosa, and primarily from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The findings indicate that interactional uncertainty is introduced and perpetuated during the collecting of family histories in South African GC prenatal consultations. Given the absence of written medical records, genetic specialists rely on verbal patient narratives to obtain family history information. Uncertainty concerning patient-reported family information leads to knowledge asymmetries, a shift in epistemic authority, and difficulties in giving correct risk evaluations.

The study provides recommendations for training and practice, especially with relation to managing and tolerating uncertainty through the use of specialized communication strategies and video-based research methods.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116555>

### Associations between nutrition knowledge and obesity-related attitudes and physical activity among young adults from Kenya, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.



Dr. Siphwe Dlamini

Obesity has also been linked to an increased risk of certain cancers.

Dlamini et al. (2024) examined the relationships between nutrition knowledge, obesity-related attitudes, and physical activity among 3,000 young individuals from Kenya, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

This cross-sectional study used the IPSOS i-Say panel to recruit participants aged 18 to 35, and the survey was conducted online in April 2022.

According to this research, there appears to be a correlation between an increase in nutrition knowledge and a greater propensity to believe weight-biased statements. The findings highlight the need of public initiatives that aim to promote health knowledge for effective implementation of relevant policies. However, health education efforts should be complemented with campaigns that also raise awareness of the various causes of obesity and lessen the possibility of weight bias associated with enhanced health knowledge in order to make policy action more easily accepted.

The findings strongly imply that a great deal of the relationships between nutrition knowledge and attitudes toward obesity and PA behavior vary by country, with many of the associations found in the UK, the country with the highest level of economic development, and not found in Kenya, the country with the lowest level. Thus, before being applied in low-resource environments, public health interventions based on research from high-income countries (HIC) should be thoroughly assessed in lower middle-income countries (LMIC). <https://doi.org/10.1080/16070658.2023.2198844>

## CoE-HUMAN



### Publications

1. Desmond, C., Watt, K., Naicker, S., Behrman, J., & Richter, L. (2024). Girls' schooling is important but insufficient to promote equality for boys and girls in childhood and across the life course. *Development Policy Review*, 42(1), e12738. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12738>

2. Dlamini, S. N., Mtintsilana, A., Mapanga, W., Craig, A., & Norris, S. A. (2024). Associations between nutrition knowledge and obesity-related attitudes and physical activity among young adults from Kenya, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. *South African Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 37(1), 9–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16070658.2023.2198844>

3. Mabetha, K., Soepnel, L. M., SSewanyana, D., Draper, C. E., Lye, S., & Norris, S. A. (2024). A qualitative exploration of the reasons and influencing factors for pregnancy termination among young women in Soweto, South Africa: A Socio-ecological perspective. *Reproductive Health*, 21(1), 109. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-024-01852-8>

4. Prioreschi, A., Ware, L. J., Draper, C. E., Lye, S., & Norris, S. A. (2024). Contextualising individual, household and community level factors associated with sugar-sweetened beverage intake and screen time in Soweto, South Africa. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 19(5), 758–774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2022.2032901>

5. Scott, M., Watermeyer, J., & Wessels, T.-M. (2024). "We are just not sure what that means or if it's relevant": Uncertainty when gathering family history information in South African prenatal genetic counseling consultations. *Social Science & Medicine*, 342, 116555. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116555>

