

# An Inquiry into the support needs of women treated with radiotherapy for cervical cancer:

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# Disclosure

- No conflict of interest to declare
- This presentation is part of an ongoing PhD project (Phase 1 results)
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# University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, South Africa



# Charlotte Maxheke academic Hospital



# Background

- According to International Agency for research on cancer, and World Health organization, cancer accounted for 8,2 million deaths worldwide, with 14.1 million newly diagnosed and a population of 32.6 million living with cancer in 2012
- Cancer is a global health problem and has no borders
- A cancer diagnosis can alter a person's perception of health and destroys future plans



## Background cont ...

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women and fourth most common cause of death in women worldwide

- 83% of women diagnosed with cervical cancer are from developing world
- Women in sub- Sahara lose more years to cervical cancer



# Background....

- Treatment of cervical cancer entails intensive treatment consisting of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy-radiation and brachytherapy
- Treatment for stage IIB – IVA consists of external beam radiation, brachytherapy with or without chemotherapy





# Problem statement

The researcher noted in practice that women with cervical cancer felt less supported

However a study conducted in Tshwane, South Africa (Maree; Mosalo & Wright, 2013) found that women hospitalised for treatment of cervical cancer at an academic hospital, were not necessarily supported by their life partners. Some were partially supported by family , whilst some were abandoned.





## Problem statement cont...

Giving and receiving support was a challenge in terms of distance and costs.

It is not clear how women treated for cervical cancer at an Academic hospital in Gauteng , South Africa would like to be supported during the period they are treated for cervical cancer

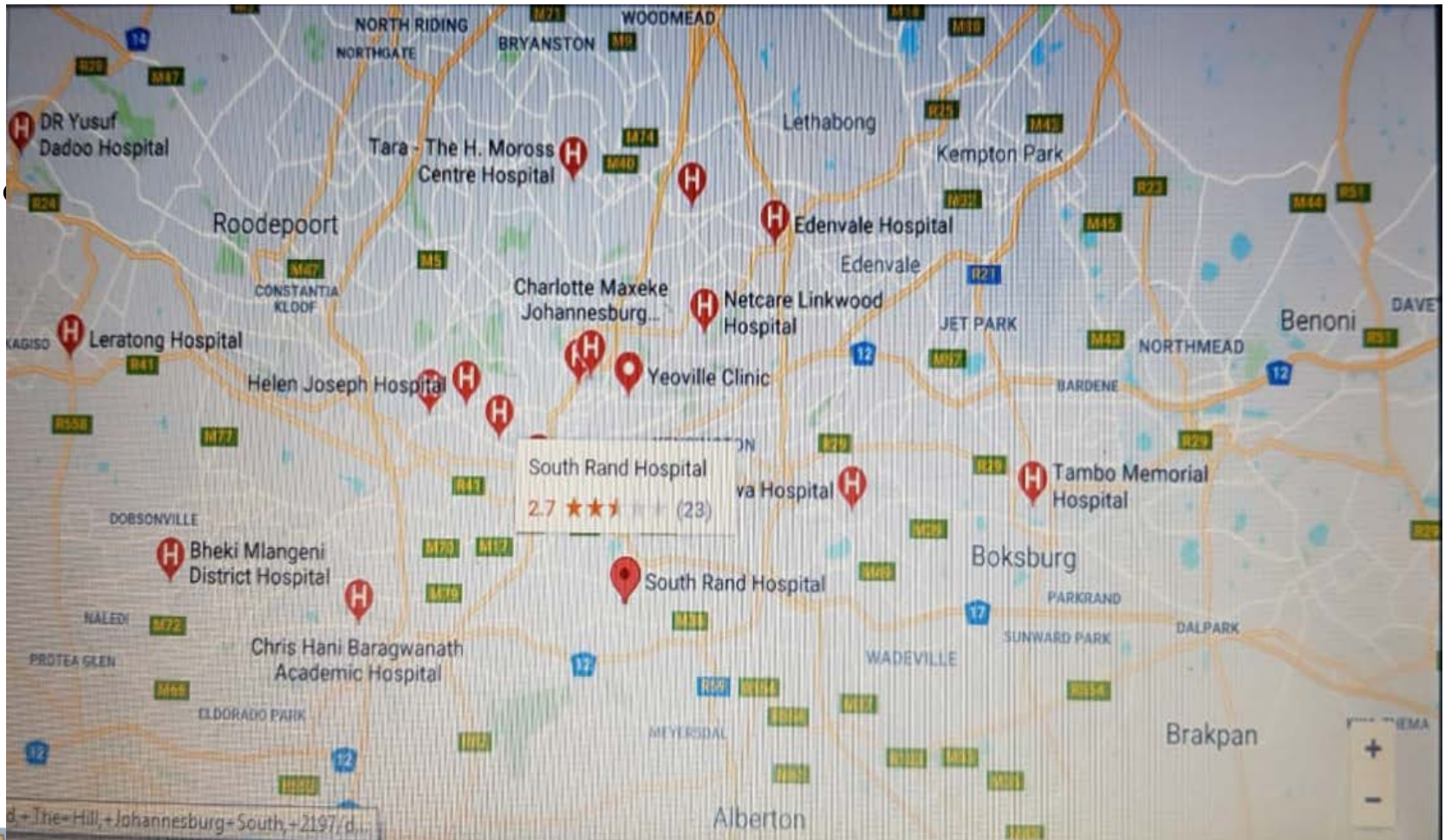


## Purpose of the study

- The purpose of study was to explore how women treated for cervical cancer at an Academic hospital in Gauteng; South Africa perceive the support they receive from the health care professionals
- How do women prefer to be supported during the period they are treated at the hospital



# Map of hospitals in Johannesburg, Gauteng



# Objectives of the study

- Explore how women treated for cervical cancer at an Academic perceive the support they receive from the health professionals
- Determine which support needs are crucial in meeting needs highlighted by the women



# Method and Design

- A qualitative explorative design was used for the study
- A template style analysis was used for participant's demographics



# Population

- Population consisted of all women treated for cervical cancer at the Academic hospital in Gauteng
- Meeting a specified criteria



# Data collection and analysis

- Data was collected using semi structured Interviews using an interview guide
- Data was analysed through open coding using Content analysis





## Findings of the study

- Demographics XXX
- Twenty –two participants took part in the study including pre-tests interviews
- The ages ranged between 31- > 55 years
- Eleven Participants(n=11) between ages 41- 50yrs
- Seven participants (n=7) between ages 51 > 55 yrs.
- Four participants( N=4) between ages 31-40yrs



## Demographics...

- Ten (n=10) of 22 participants had between 4 > 5 children
- Followed by nine (n=9) with 2 > 3 children
- Followed by three (n=3) with 0 - 1 child



# Findings of the study

Four themes emerged from the study:

## Route to diagnosis during trajectory of cancer:

Most of the participant did experience that something was wrong, as characterised by early signs of cervical cancer.

- symptoms experienced

“You know sister the truth is that hospital processes are slow, I started around June last year. I experienced pains and continuous bleeding. Then I decided to go to a private doctor” (participant 1).

- staff actions

“Actually I first went to the clinic, but they were unable to do pap smear because I was bleeding. Then doctor gave me pills to stop the bleeding “ Participant, 7).



Findings cont...

**Information received:**

Some of the participants were informed about their illness

- Information pertaining investigations and diagnostic tests
- “I had a papsmear in October, then in November I went back for my results., they never said anything. I was only told in December” The doctor said I have cancer I must start treatment (participant , 6).



# Findings cont...

- need for referral to hospital( tertiary care centre)
- “ The doctor examined me and felt a growth inside, he then said I will have to refer you” (participant 8).



## Findings cont...

### Support needs highlighted

most participants expressed need for information pertaining to illness

- information pertaining to illness

“Like when we arrive in the morning . maybe a staff member should come and explain. Its better when we are a group. It ‘s a bit difficult when you are alone”  
(participant 11)

- 



## Findings cont...

- tangible support and financial assistance

“ for me if they can assist with ladies stuff, I am unable to go to the shops. My husband is unable to go buy for me” so If they can supply with sanitary Pads”( Participant 8)

“ for me if they can supply us with food, because we dont eat right and money for transport

- need for counselling

Some of the participant find it difficult to accept the diagnosis

- “counselling would be ideal! Like myself I am staying with my children and I’m attending the machine. Then where will I be after ten years” ( participant 16).





## Findings cont...

### Family support when learning about illness:

- for some of the participants it became a challenge to inform her family about her condition
- sharing information about the disease

“Like myself when you having cancer you have this bad smell. So doctor asked me if he can inform my family,? I said yes because, my mom drinks. She will not support me with anything”( participant, 6)

- encourage to pursue treatment



## Recommendations

- There is still evidence that health care professionals do not pay much attention when women present with early signs of cervical cancer
- Counselling should be given throughout disease trajectory from diagnosis throughout the treatment process
- An education support program is recommended to help women adapt to the disease and the treatment



# Thank you



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