

Abstract OPEN ACCESS

# African American Women's Experiences Without Breast Reconstruction

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study examines the experiences of African American women (AAW) who had mastectomy without breast reconstruction (MWBR). In 2024, an estimated 310,720 new breast cancer cases are expected in the U.S., with AAW diagnosed at later stages and 30% less likely to undergo reconstruction.

**Purpose:** To explore the lived experiences and reasons behind mastectomy without breast reconstruction (MWBR) decisions among African American women.

**Methods:** Qualitative phenomenological interviews were conducted with ten African American women (AAW) aged 18 and older who had MWBR. Participants were recruited through the Sister's Network Greater Metropolitan Detroit Chapter (SNGMDC). Interviews lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour.

**Results:** Participants' reasons for opting out of reconstruction included avoiding additional surgery, with one stating, "I was pleased with the mastectomy and didn't want another surgery." Support groups influenced decisions; as another participant noted, "My support group advised me not to have reconstruction." Some found prostheses comfortable, with one saying, "My prostheses fit in my bras nicely." Health complications like infections prevented others from pursuing reconstruction, with one participant explaining, "I couldn't do it due to setbacks caused by infections."

**Conclusion:** AAW navigates post-mastectomy experiences by prioritizing personal choice, using support networks, and incorporating prostheses into recovery.

**Implication:** Nurses can enhance care by providing culturally sensitive support, advocating for patient autonomy, and offering tailored education and peer resources to improve satisfaction and outcomes.