

# STRENGTHENING BREAST CANCER CARE

## RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IN HAWASSA, ETHIOPIA

### A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

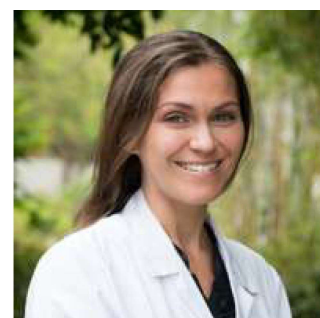
The most common cancer in Ethiopia is breast cancer (BC). The Ethiopian Cancer Registry estimates that 16,000 new BC cases are diagnosed per year

—Lesley Taylor, M.D.

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy worldwide, with the highest mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that 1/3 of the 416,000 projected deaths in the region over the next decade can be prevented by improvements in diagnosis and treatment. In addition, study of breast cancer biology has historically excluded African researchers and populations. To address global inequities in breast cancer outcomes, survival, and participation in research, my focus is on developing an initiative that tangibly connects the City of Hope (COH) community to collaborators in Ethiopia. The overall objective of the City of Hope- Ethiopia Breast Cancer Initiative (C-E BCI) is to strengthen global breast cancer education, research and care.

Ethiopia is the second most populous African country with one of the lowest GDP's and ratios of healthcare providers per patient. The majority of breast cancer patients are young women between the ages of late 30s to early 40s, 75% of whom present with late-stage disease associated with premature death and suffering. Yet, 2/3 of breast cancers are estrogen receptor positive which, when detected early, is potentially curable with surgery and tamoxifen (a pill costing \$1.5 per month), if detected early and treated correctly. Improving patient outcomes is within reach. So too is expanding our understanding of breast cancer biology, since 2/3 of breast cancers in the United States are also estrogen positive phenotype.

This initiative connects the COH community (one of the oldest and resource rich cancer centers in the world) to two institutions in Ethiopia: Addis Ababa University (AAU) located in the capital city of Addis Ababa; and Hawassa University (HU), located in the southern region of the country. The initiative is a natural extension of a decade of prior collaboration with multidisciplinary, international teams. The initiative is comprised of four programs interlinked by the common objective: to develop quality research, education, and patient care projects to improve outcomes and scientific understanding of breast cancer. Programs and projects have been carefully designed with input from Ethiopian colleagues to align with local priorities, addressing unmet needs. By supporting these projects, all participants benefit from bi-directional education that will generate novel approaches to taking care of patients with breast cancer both in Africa and the US.



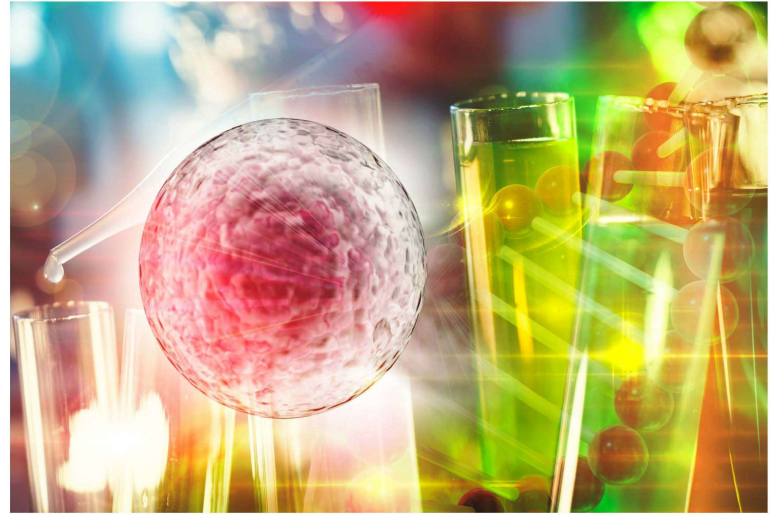
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**Nursing Education Program (COH-HU):** Education projects involve supporting the Master's and PhD program development, faculty training, and research on breast cancer. The COH community collaborates with Ethiopian faculty and graduate students in formulating interdisciplinary proposals for research, supporting individual research projects, and preparing results for dissemination. We are also developing a Train-the-Trainer program for oncology, aiming to implement the training in 12 sub-Saharan African countries.

**Pathology Capacity Building Program (COH-HU):** These projects are focused on developing capability to perform manual immunohistochemistry staining with optimal quality, as understanding breast cancer phenotype directly impacts patient treatment decisions and informs research and resource allocation.

**Oncology Unit Program (COH-HU):** Projects focus on developing global oncology research infrastructure for clinicians, researchers, and graduate students. The Breast Cancer Specific Database comprises of clinical and pathology variables. The database will be used for study of cancer biology and interventions to improve patient outcomes. The Breast Cancer Advocacy Project identifies opportunities to support patients and explore what advocacy means in the Ethiopian context.

**ER positive Breast Cancer Biology Program (COH-AAU):** The long-term goal is to understand breast cancer characteristics and contribute to discoveries of novel therapies by including African scientists, collaborators, and populations in scientific inquiry.



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