

Table 2 Health belief model determinants and emerged themes for perceptions of Iranian women regarding breast cancer screening behaviour

Determinant	Theme	Sample quotes
Perceived barriers Beliefs regarding whether one can overcome difficulties or negative consequences of adopting a health behaviour	Low priority	I usually pay attention to my child and my husband's health first and my own health is my second concern.
	Fear	I am scared of doing sonography. I am scared of knowing that there is something wrong with my breasts.
	Cultural values	I believe that people will attract whatever they think about. So, I try not to think that I might get breast cancer, instead I try to think that I would never get breast cancer... I try to want good things for myself.
	Inadequate doctor-patient relationship	Gynaecologists do not encourage women to have sonography or mammography. For example, they do not ask a patient about the last time she had a sonography or a mammography examination or whether she has ever had it. Nor they remind a patient that they should adopt breast cancer screening after a certain age. Only some of them examine their patients' breasts.
Perceived severity Beliefs about the seriousness of developing a disease, consisting of two dimensions; evaluation of medical consequences and evaluation of social consequences of a disease	Treatable in early stage	I do not think that breast cancer is a severe disease, because if it is diagnosed in its early stage, the person still has a high chance of survival, because breast cancer can be easily cured in that stage.
	Pain	Breast cancer is a severe disease, because one has to deal with a long-term pain.
	Threat to femininity	You may lose your breast, the feminine part of your body. Nothing can replace it.
	Disturbance	Having breast cancer disturbs one's daily routine and forces her to deal with stressful issues.
Perceived susceptibility Individuals' subjective risk perceptions of developing a disease	No family history	We do not have a history of cancer in our family, so I do not see myself at risk of getting it.
	High prevalence	I do see myself at risk of getting breast cancer, because I see a lot of women dealing with it. Nowadays, in Iran cancer could happen to anybody. It has become like a tsunami.
Perceived benefits Evaluation of a particular health behaviour in terms of benefits and effectiveness in curing the disease	Curability because of early detection	I think breast cancer screening is beneficial. It helps you find out about the disease early. Breast cancer might be curable if it is diagnosed in the early stage.
Self-efficacy Individuals' perceived ability and capability to adopt a health behaviour	Not able to perform breast self-examination Able to make health-related decisions	I do not perform breast self-examination, because I am not able to understand the differences between the lumps inside my breast. And this makes me more worried and nervous. I decide about my health on my own.
Cues to action Internal or external stimuli that motivate one to take action	Talking about breast cancer	I talk about breast cancer with my mother. She always emphasizes on taking care of our breasts.
	Observing a person undergoing breast cancer screening	I think if somebody in my family decides to examine her breasts for cancer, I might get motivated to do so as well. For example, if my sister decides to screen her breasts for cancer I might decide to do it as well. Because it makes me start thinking about my health.