

# **Storytelling Online: The Therapeutic Value of Internet breast Cancer Communities**

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LONDON -- In 1960, at the age of forty-eight, my grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Soon after her diagnosis, she went through a mastectomy. At the time of her diagnosis and throughout the following years, very few people knew about her illness, and those who did knew very little. When her eldest son (my father), then aged 19, came to visit her in the hospital after her mastectomy, all he knew was that she had gone through an operation to combat a "severe disease". He had no idea that she was suffering from cancer, not to mention the fact she had lost one of her breasts.

There was a general silence around her illness: both "breast" and "cancer" were words that signified an utter taboo, especially in the cultural and social context of my grandmother's community: the kibbutz. The kibbutz was characterised by an overwhelming machismo where the expression of feelings and fears was considered a weakness and thus implicitly excluded from everyday communication. A collectivist society founded upon a socialist ideology, the community of **[SNIP – End of preview.]**