

A study to assess the knowledge regarding breast cancer and breast self-examination (BSE) among lady doctors and staff nurses of a tertiary care centre

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Introduction

Globally, breast cancer is the most common neoplasm in women. Late presentation contributes to poor outcome and high fatality rate. Most successful approach to decrease mortality due to breast cancer is the application of secondary prevention which includes Breast Self-Examination (BSE), Clinical Breast Examination (CBE) and Mammography. Mammography is expensive and technology driven. BSE is easy, cheap and self monitored. Therefore, it is important to empower women on the BSE as a primary tool for screening especially among the high risk group in developing countries. Despite the effectiveness of BSE in reducing mortality, research findings indicate the screening rates remain low. The foremost barriers being forgetfulness, lack of time, ignorance, fear and anxiety and low level of education. The health care workers play an important role in communicating health behaviours to the public hence it is important to assess the level of knowledge regarding the BSE as well as their attitude and practice towards it.*Methodology A sample size of 200 randomly selected female health care workers (HCW) (107 doctors & 93 nurses) was taken. A self-

administered, pre-tested, structured, close ended questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge of breast cancer, breast self-examination and responses to the practice of breast self examination by the study subjects.

Result

Mean Score about the knowledge regarding risk factors of breast cancer, and basic steps and procedure of BSE was 62%, in which doctors had a higher score. There was a major lack in performing BSE by HCW. Eighty two percent of HCW had never performed BSE themselves. Only 40% of HCW advise their patients to perform BSE.

Conclusion

Knowledge, attitude and practice towards BSE is lacking among the HCWs. Female HCWs act as role models in communicating health behaviors to general public. These issues need to be addressed through appropriate education and interventional strategies to curb the problem of late presentation and increase the survival rate of breast cancer patients.