

A study on awareness and knowledge of breast cancer among females at selected colleges of Bangalore, Karnataka

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Abstract

Background of the study

Cancer is a disease of the cell in which the normal mechanisms for control of growth and proliferation have been altered. The incidence of breast cancer increases with age, more than 77% of women diagnosed with breast cancer are older than 50 years of age at diagnosis. According to the estimation of the Indian Council of Medical Research, there would be highest incidence rate for all cancers where more than 8.8 lakh deaths attributed to cancers by the year 2020, with cancer of breast, lung and cervix topping the list. Breast cancer is the most common diagnosed cancer in females that develops in breast cells whereas in males, the incidence of oral cancer is has been increasing. Many women diagnosed with breast cancer have no known risk factors. The highest incidences of cancers were reported from north-east regions of the country for both males and females. In the west, overall both the incidence and mortality rate of cancer have been declining. In India, the incidence is on the rise. In India the incidence of cancer is higher in women than in men, whereas globally it is higher in men than in women.

Objectives

- To assess the level of knowledge and awareness of breast cancer among women in selected colleges of Bangalore.
- To find out the association between knowledge on breast cancer and selected demographic variables.

Methods

The study was done to assess the awareness and knowledge of breast cancer among females at selected colleges of Bangalore, Karnataka. This was a descriptive study which comprises of 96 women participants of age group (20-50 years), selected by non-probability convenient sampling method. Data were collected by using a self-administered questionnaire which addressed questions on socio-demographic data and knowledge of breast cancer prepared by the investigator. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

The results showed insufficient knowledge of breast cancer among the participants. The majority of the participants were ignorant of common symptoms of breast cancer and also they were not aware of Breast Self-Examination. Overall, most of the participants indicated the need for increased breast cancer awareness among the females.

Conclusion

Deaths resulting from breast cancer are tragic. Breast cancer develops slowly, which is treatable and can be prevented through screening. Therefore, it is important to raise the level of knowledge among women so that negative attitudes and gaps in knowledge should be addressed early.

Keywords: Awareness, knowledge, breast cancer, breast self-examination

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I. Introduction

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by unrestrained and unregulated growth of cells. The incidence of being diagnosed with breast cancer increases with each decade of life. The female body is one of the most wonderful and complex creations of the nature. It is the origin of all human life. A woman's journey in life is marked by many milestones; childhood, puberty, matrimony, pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood and each milestone special in its own way.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among females in the worldwide representing nearly a quarter (23%) of all cancers in women. The global burden of breast cancer is expected to exceed 2 million by the year 2030, with growing proportions from developing countries. The incidence of breast cancer in India display a 3-4-fold variation across the country, with the highest incidence rates observed in the Northeast and in major metropolitan cities such as Mumbai and New Delhi.

Breast cancer accounts for 19-34% of all cancer cases in women in India. According to National cancer registries and Regional Cancer Centers, it is the commonest cancer among women in Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmadabad, Kolkata and Trivandrum. In all other cancer registries, it is listed as the second most cancer among women. Risk factors for breast cancer include: Sex: Female, although men can also get breast cancer, increasing age, 40 and above, personal history of breast cancer, family members with breast cancer, early menarche, late menopause, or being either nulliparous or elder than 30 years at the birth of a first child, absence of breastfeeding, taking hormone replacement therapy for long periods of time, increased breast density which relates to their effect on circulating hormones.

Common signs and symptoms of breast cancer include a lump in the breast that feel distinctly different from other breast tissue, dimpling or pulling of the skin on the breast, any change in the breast shape or contour nipple discharge, retraction and scaliness of the nipple, pain or tenderness of the breast and swollen lumps or pus filled sores. At present the simplest, inexpensive way to detect breast cancer is breast self-examination. Regular breast self-examination and early detection through routine screening is the key to identify any abnormal changes in breast to establish good prognosis.

Breast cancer mortality could be reduced by 30% through early detection using routine screening mammography alone or together with an annual clinical breast examination by a primary health care provider. Early detection and screening significantly reduce the death rates from cancers. Education of public is essential to provide realistic attitudes about cancer and cancer treatment.

II. Methods

The research approach selected for the study was quantitative approach with descriptive design. The study was conducted in two settings --- NMKRV PU College for women and NMKRV Degree College for women, Jayanagar 3rd Block, Bangalore. Data was collected by using non-probability convenient sampling method. A formal permission was obtained from the Principals of both the colleges. A total of 96 female participants between the age group of 21 and above 50 years participated in the study. A self-administered pretest questionnaire was used to collect the relevant details. Care was also taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the participants. An awareness talk was given about breast cancer and video and a PowerPoint presentation were done about breast self-examination. After the health education session, post test questionnaire was administered to the students. The data of pre-test and post-test were collected and analyzed using SPSS.

Sample Size

The sample size was 96 female participants.

Sampling technique

Non probability convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample.

Tool for data collection

The tool was developed by the researcher which consists of two sections:-

Section-I addressed the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Section-II addressed questionnaire on knowledge of breast cancer.

Method of data collection

Data was collected by using structured questionnaire.

Procedure for data collection

Prior consent was obtained from the participants before the interview. The participants were explained about the purpose of the study and ensured the anonymity and confidentiality and written consent was obtained from them. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants and were instructed to choose only one answer from the options given under each question and circle it clearly.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed and interpreted as per the objectives of the study by using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Reliability of the tool was elicited by using test-retest method by using Pearson's correlation coefficient and it was found to be $r = 0.88$ which was reliable. Association between categorical variables was explored using Chi-square. $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

III. Results

Pretest and posttest were collected from 96 participants. The age of the study participants was ranged between 20 and 50 years. Out of 96 women interviewed most of them were aware of breast cancer. Majority of the participants are ignorant about the common symptoms of breast cancer. It is surprising to know that only 15% of women knew about Breast Self-Examination. The mean pretest knowledge score for breast cancer for NMKRV PU College was 8.03 ($P < 0.001$). The mean pretest knowledge score for breast cancer for NMKRV Degree College was 6.88 ($P < 0.001$).

After the health talk session, the level of knowledge regarding breast cancer was increased considerably. The knowledge about the common symptoms of breast cancer was improved after the awareness program. Majority of women, 90% of women expressed that they would regularly perform Breast Self-Examination monthly. The mean posttest knowledge score for breast cancer for NMKRV PU College was 11.45 ($P < 0.001$). The mean posttest knowledge score for breast cancer for NMKRV Degree College was 9.91 ($P < 0.001$).

IV. Discussion

The study revealed that the participants are aware of breast cancer. However the knowledge regarding common symptoms and Breast Self-Examination was poor. The findings showed that few participants knew about Breast Self-Examination and very few women performed Breast Self-Examination. The study shows that there was no significant association of knowledge with the selected demographic variables. Teaching Breast Self-Examination can help women to learn about the structure and composition of their normal breasts, thereby enhancing their sensitivity to any abnormality as soon as it appears. Special awareness programmes, seminars, training courses and workshops should be conducted at educational institutes regularly. Knowledge regarding breast cancer is important not only for their own good health but also to disseminate the knowledge to others.

V. Conclusion

The study concluded that the awareness of breast cancer among the participants was good. The knowledge and awareness regarding common symptoms of breast cancer and Breast Self-Examination was poor which is utmost important for early detection of breast cancer. Cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage if women are well aware of the early signs and symptoms.

Breast cancer is a topic that is not freely discussed in India because of cultural taboo. The timely detection of breast cancer can lead to better opportunities of cost effective treatment and increased chances of survival. Hence, there is a need for more effective health education programmes among the women population so that they can share the knowledge to the other section of the society.

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