

A Study on Breast Cancer Awareness among Female Patients Attending a Tertiary Care Hospital

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Abstract

Breast cancer accounts for 19-34 % of all cancer cases among women in India. There is a high mortality associated with breast cancer due to late stage diagnosis, as patients usually present at an advanced stage of the disease. This can be attributed to factors like lack of awareness among the patients and non-existent breast cancer screening programs. This study highlights the need for awareness about breast cancer among women, propagation of valid information regarding the disease and promotes early detection of breast cancer

Keywords: Awareness, knowledge, breast cancer, Female patients

Aims and Objectives

- To assess the awareness about breast cancer among female patients who are attending the out-patient department of a tertiary care hospital.
- To assess the knowledge about the symptoms for early detection of breast cancer and its outcome
- To assess the knowledge about the investigations and treatment for breast cancer.

Methodology

Study Design

- Cross-sectional study

Study Setting

- Hospital based setting

Sample Size

- 1000 cases

Study Population

- The study population were women attending a tertiary care hospital opd and above the age of 18 yrs.

Research Instruments

Researchers developed questionnaire consisting of nineteen⁽¹⁹⁾ items were used. The questionnaire was divided into four⁽⁴⁾ sections. Section one contains demographic information of the respondents while section two contains information on the knowledge about the symptoms for early detection of breast cancer and its outcome, section three contains information on the respondents knowledge about investigations for breast cancer , section four contains knowledge about treatment modalities .

Data Collection Procedure

Data for the study were collected using self designed structured questionnaire. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability by an expert in the field and all corrections were corrected before final usage. It consisted of closed and open ended questions that were used to collect data that would meet the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was distributed to all respondents and the same was interpreted to those who were non literate, and all questionnaires were retrieved

from the respondents. The questionnaire has four sections.

Results

Table 1 : Demographic data of respondents

AGE [years]	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
18-25	538	51.53
26-35	215	20.59
35-45	171	16.38
Above 45	120	11.49
Overall	1044	100.00
Literacy	Frequency	Percentage
Literate	1006	96.36
Illiterate	38	3.64
RELIGION	Frequency	Percentage
Hindu	758	72.60
Muslim	175	16.76
Christian	201	19.25
Others	15	1.43
OCCUPATION	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	258	24.71
Housewife	647	61.97
Students	39	3.73
Hospital workers	45	4.31
Others	55	3.35

Table 2: Awareness among females about breast cancer according to their age

Sl.No	Age	Mean age \pm SD	Mean score \pm SD
1	18-25	20.226 \pm 2.8929	11.594 \pm 2.31731
2	26-35	31.065 \pm 3.21	11.827 \pm 2.3607
3	35-45	39.672 \pm 2.4297	11.7193 \pm 2.418
2	Above 45	55.158 \pm 7.549	11.5833 \pm 2.4065
5	Overall	29.659 \pm 12.30589	10.691 \pm 2.3356

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations of females according to their age. The highest mean and standard deviation comes from above 45 years of females (55.158±7.549)

Table 3: Awareness among females about breast cancer according to their literacy

Sl.No	Literacy	Mean age ± SD	Mean score ± SD
1	Literate	29.6878±12.3409	11.961±2.3356
2	Illiterate	28.894±11.465	10.868±2.6627

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviations of females according to their literacy. The highest mean and standard deviation comes from literate females (29.6878±12.3409)

Table 4: Mean percentage of awareness among females about breast cancer according to their age.

Sl.No	Age	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Mean percentage
1	18-25	11.594	2.31731	52.703
2	26-35	11.827	2.3607	53.763
3	35-45	11.7193	2.418	53.269
4	Above 45	11.5833	2.4065	52.65
5	Overall	10.691	2.3356	48.59

Table 4 shows the mean percentage of awareness among females about breast cancer according to their age. It shows that females aged between 26 to 35 has highest knowledge about awareness (53.763).

Table 5: Mean percentage of awareness among females about breast cancer according to their literacy.

Sl.No	Age	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Mean percentage
1	Literate	11.961	2.3356	53.144
2	Illiterate	10.868	2.6627	49.401

Table 5 shows mean percentage of awareness among females about breast cancer according to their literacy. It shows that literate females have highest knowledge (53.144) when comparing to illiterate females (49.401)

Table 6: Knowledge about symptoms among females about breast cancer according to their age.

Sl.No	Age	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Mean percentage
1	18-25	3.172	1.2043	52.88
2	26-35	3.265	1.2033	54.41
3	35-45	3.3040	1.2929	55.068
2	Above 45	3.225	1.141	53.75
5	Overall	3.0576	1.2405	50.9609

Table 6 shows the mean percentage of knowledge about symptoms among females about breast cancer according to their age. It shows that females aged between 35 to 45 have highest knowledge about awareness (55.068).

Discussion

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy affecting women, with more than one million cases occurring worldwide annually. In India, it is the second commonest cancer among females. Though it can be detected early by self and clinical breast examination or mammography, in our country only 15% patients present in the localized stage; in 75% regional lymph nodes are already involved while 10% have distant spread at the time of reporting.⁽¹⁾ This is due to lack of awareness and nonexistent breast cancer screening programmes. Early detection and prompt treatment offer the greatest chance of long term survival and breast self examination (BSE) seems to be an important viable optional substitute for early detection of cancer.⁽²⁾

The study was carried out to find out the awareness among female patients about breast cancer who are attending a tertiary care hospital opd . Findings from this study however revealed that majority of women had insufficient knowledge about breast cancer . These findings were similar to those of these studies of other Asian countries showing below average awareness about the existence of breast cancer and their symptoms.

Our findings confirmed the previous reports ⁽³⁻⁵⁾ that the deficit in the knowledge of symptoms and risk factors might be the reason for the delayed presentation in breast cancer in developing countries . However , in developed nations where there is a diminution in mortality secondary to early detection and improved treatment modalities ⁽⁶⁻⁷⁾ , delayed presentation remains a problem for older women as seen in British , American

and Australian women⁽⁹⁾

It is also noteworthy that illiterate women lack sufficient knowledge on risk factors and management of breast cancer.

Conclusion

In this present study 1044 females who participated were above the age of 18 years . Their overall mean knowledge score is 48.59. This level of knowledge about breast cancer is inadequate. This study highlights the need for more educational programmes to provide comprehensive information about breast cancer thereby helping in early detection and prompt reporting of breast cancer for the better treatment.

Ethical Approval: Approval for the study was obtained from the ethical committee of Aarupadai Veedu Medical college & Hospital, Pondicherry . Informed consent was obtained from each respondent and they were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided.

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Conflicts of Interest: None

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