

OP19: Correlation of knowledge regarding breast cancer and awareness and practices of cancer screening with the stage of the disease

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Abstract: Introduction: Early diagnosis is the key for better prognosis in breast cancer.

Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among 116 randomly selected patients with breast carcinoma

referred to National Cancer Institute, Sri Lanka from May to July 2014. Prior knowledge regarding breast cancer and awareness and practices related to breast cancer screening were assessed using an interviewer administered questionnaire. Their association with the stage of the breast cancer at the time of diagnosis was evaluated.

Results: The population was aged 30-74[mean(SD)=55.7(±10.7)] years. The mode(median) staging of the disease at diagnosis was IIA(IIB). Mean knowledge score was 40.8%(±33.9%). Only 57.8%(n=67) were aware of the term breast cancer. Education level positively correlated with the knowledge score($r=.440, p=.000$). Of those aware of self breast examination (SBE)(41.4%,n=48),23.28%(n=27) had performed it at least once before the diagnosis. SBE technique score positively correlated with the knowledge score($r=.394, p=.042$). Patients who had received formal instructions on performing SBE had a higher SBE score($t(46)=3.103, p=.003$). Only 31.6%(n=37) were aware of clinical breast examination (CBE) and 24.3%(n=9) of them had undergone CBE. Of patients above 35 years,5.1%(n=6) had undergone screening mammography through self referral. None had undergone serial mammography. The education level, breast cancer knowledge score or SBE technique score did not correlate with the stage of breast cancer at the point of diagnosis($p>.05$).

Conclusions: Knowledge and practice of breast cancer screening methods, especially mammography, is inadequate in our population. Professional guidance improves the SBE technique. In the study population, neither good knowledge on breast cancer nor practicing SBE lead to early diagnosis.