

Importance of Awareness, Specific Knowledge and Screening Behavior of Rural Women with Breast Cancer at Government General Hospital, Guntur, A.P.

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ABSTRACT

Breast cancer is the second most common malignancy in India and majority of the present patients are suffering from locally advanced breast carcinoma (LABC). Breast cancer accounts for 5-8% of all cancer in India and the incidence is on the rise. Breast cancer screening includes tests to detect breast cancer at an early stage before a woman discovers a lump. The chance of dying from breast cancer has declined by about one third over the past few decades. Control of breast cancer depends on increase in public awareness of the disease. Treatment should be heavily subsidized by the government and screening programme must be incorporated in primary health care centers as well as improving infrastructural development of health facilities. Importantly, the outcome of such screening would guide the management conditions throughout life including the decision-making process in which the individual would be an important part. This article reviewed the importance of awareness, specific knowledge about breast cancer, screening methods which includes when it must be started.

Keywords: Breast Cancer, Risk Factors, Screening Methods, Importance of Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is the second most common malignancy in India and majority of the present patients are suffering from locally advanced breast carcinoma (LABC). The incidence of breast cancer is rising in every country especially in developing countries such as India. This is because more and more women in India are beginning to work outside their homes which allow the various risk factors of breast cancer to come into play. Breast cancer accounts for 5-8% of all cancer in India, (Chandra AB. 1979) and the incidence is on the rise. (Kuraparthi S, Reddy KM, et al. 2007) It is the most common cancer in urban Indian women and the second most common disease in rural women. (Agarwal G, Ramakant P. 2008) Locally advanced breast cancer (LABC) accounts for 50% of all breast cancers. (Agarwal G, Pradeep PV et al. 2007) This incidence is quite high when compared with the western statistics. The reason for this advancement is patient's negligence, health system failure or tumor biology. Breast cancer screening includes tests to detect breast cancer at an early stage before a woman discovers a lump. The chance of dying from breast cancer has declined by about a third over the past few decades. This is due to breast cancer screening to detect cancer at an earlier stage.

Breast cancer is more likely to be cured when it is caught earlier. This article discusses the importance of awareness, specific knowledge about breast cancer, screening methods which includes when it must be started.

METHODS

Risk factors for Breast Cancer:

The main risk factor for getting breast cancer is being a woman (although a small percentage of men are diagnosed with the disease); white woman are slightly more susceptible. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), most women who develop breast cancer are over the age of fifty and a woman's risk for developing breast cancer increases with age. Twenty to thirty percent of women diagnosed have a family history of breast cancer. Other risk factors include: Lifestyle factors such as alcohol consumption, smoking, exposure to x-rays, environmental pollutants such as secondhand smoke etc.

Breast cancer is influenced by estrogen production. So, women who matured young (before age 12) or began menopause late (after 55) are at slightly higher risk than the average women.

Other reasons like women who have not given birth, had children after the age of 30, did not breast feed, taking combination hormone replacement after menopause were also at the risk of developing cancerous breast tumors.

Personal History of Breast Cancer:

A woman who had breast cancer in one breast has an increased risk of getting a second breast cancer.

Family History:

A woman's risk of breast cancer is higher if her mother, sister or daughter had breast cancer. The risk becomes significant if at least two close relatives had breast or ovarian cancer. The risk is higher if her family member got breast cancer before the age of 40. An Australian study found that having other relatives with breast cancer (in either her mother's or father's family) may also increase the woman's risk of breast cancer and other forms of cancer including brain and lung cancers (<http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/wellbeing/study-finds-big-risk-of-cancer-in-the-family>: 2010).

Certain Breast Changes:

A typical hyperplasia and lobular carcinoma in situ found in benign breast conditions such as fibrocystic breast changes are correlated with an increased breast cancer risk.

Problem Areas:

- o Fear -need reassuring messages.
- o Signs & symptoms -need to increase awareness of wide range of symptoms.
- o Risk factor knowledge, particularly age.
- o Breast awareness vs. breast self-examination.
- o Knowledge of screening programme.

Importance of Breast Cancer Awareness Campaigns:

The purpose of the various breast cancer awareness campaigns is to increase awareness of early breast cancer detection services among women and especially to reduce if not to eliminate cultural and economic barriers to breast screening services.

Annual Health Awareness Campaigns for Public Education:

These are educational sessions in the form of talks, videos, seminars, pamphlets and posters informing the public in general about the most prevalent cancers. Media campaigns have been introduced by means of newspaper articles, advertisements and interviews broadcast on TV and radio. Early detection and prevention campaigns provide counseling, appointment-making assistance and

referrals to screening services. Individuals are informed about health centers offering these services in their vicinity. Health exhibitions in the form of health fairs and contests are held and printed educational materials are always handed out during these activities.

Breast Cancer Screening Methods:

There are three main ways to screen for breast cancer:

1. Mammogram,
2. Breast exam with your doctor or nurse and
3. Breast self-examination.

Mammogram: A mammogram is a breast X-ray. It is the best screening test for reducing the risk of dying from breast cancer. Each breast is X-rayed individually. The breast is flattened between two panels. This can be uncomfortable, but it only takes a few seconds. If possible, try to avoid scheduling your mammogram just before or during your menstrual period as the breasts are more sensitive. Also, do not use underarm deodorant on the day of your appointment.

Breast Exam by your Doctor or Nurse: Doctor or nurse might perform a breast exam on a regular basis as part of breast cancer screening. During the exam, the doctor or nurse will look at the breasts and then carefully feel both breasts and the area under both arms. Most expert groups recommend having a breast exam along with a mammogram starting at age of 40 year to 50 year old.

Breast Self-Examination: Breast self-examination is a way of finding changes in your own breasts. No study has shown that breast self-examination reduces the risk of dying from breast cancer. Nevertheless, some women feel that doing breast self-examination on a regular basis improves their ability to find changes that would otherwise not have been unnoticed. Many expert groups encourage breast self-awareness, which includes education about risk factors for breast cancer and what to do if a breast abnormality is detected. Women who want to perform breast self-examination should still continue to get regular mammograms and breast examinations by doctor or nurse as they are the better screening tests. (Suzanne W Fletcher. 2012.)

Breast MRI: Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) uses a strong magnet rather than X-rays to create a detailed image. Compared to mammograms, breast MRI has got the following advantages:

- Has more 'false positive' findings (changes that are not breast cancer).
- May lead to more unnecessary biopsies in women who are not at high risk for breast cancer.

Breast MRI may be recommended in addition to mammography to help find breast cancer in young women with a high risk of developing breast cancer (such as those with a very strong family history or a breast cancer gene) (Saslow D, Boetes C, et al. 2007).

Clinical Implications & Recommendations:

It has been well documented that needs assessment is helpful in directing prevention efforts of various diseases. (McLennan JD. 1998; Jemmott LS, Maula EC, Bush E. 1999; Brassard P, Smeja C, Valverde C. 1996; Singla N, Sharma PP, Jain RC. 1998). These results provide important baseline information about breast cancer awareness. Such information may be used to develop tailored breast cancer education programs, increase primary and secondary prevention efforts and to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention programs like:

1. Cancer Screening
2. The lack of facilities which impacts negatively on the outreach activities and thus necessitates consideration of the following points such as:
 - a) Not every public hospital has a mammogram machine, thus information on which hospitals do have such machines must be made available to the public.
 - b) The cost of testing and the days and time that the testing takes place should be made known. This is vital information for personal financial planning purposes.
 - c) Increased availability of mobile mammogram services could be considered especially during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. (BCAM).
 - d) Training in cultural diversity for the campaign representatives
 - e) Development of partnerships (Matatiele PR, Van den Heever WMJ. 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

Cancer of the breast has established screening methods that work. Control of breast cancer depends on increase in public awareness of the disease. Treatment should be heavily subsidized by the government and screening programme incorporated into the primary health care as well as improving infrastructural development of health facilities. To reduce the burden, there should be

constant training and re-training of personnel. In order to stimulate regular screening among women, there should be an aggressive health promotion intervention designed to increase awareness and to correct impressions about breast cancer in the community. Importantly, the outcome of such screening would guide management of conditions throughout life including the decision-making process in which the individual would be an important part.

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