



A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY TO ASSESS BREAST SELF EXAMINATION PRACTICE AMONG WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

It is important to assess the existing practices related to breast cancer and its screening in the general population in order to design and initiate effective health promotion strategies for protecting and reducing mortality against breast cancer. Women must have enough understanding about breast self-examination and breast cancer to help them in conducting breast self-examination on a regular basis and to help in the early diagnosis of the cancer if they notice any changes in their breasts. So, this study aimed to evaluate practice of women in Thiruvananthapuram of South Kerala regarding breast self-examination. Data was collected from 233 women in age group of 20 - 60 years in Kerala. 209 (92.3%) participants were agreed that female above 20 years should practice breast self-examination frequently and 191 (84.6%) participants agreed that Breast self-examination should be made mandatory for all female. 217 (96.2%) participants agreed that female must be educated about breast self-examination. This study revealed a larger proportion of respondents have heard about breast cancer and breast self-examination but with adequate knowledge of the correct procedures of breast self-examination (BSE) thereby resulting into good practice of breast self-examination (BSE).

KEYWORDS: Practice, Breast Cancer, Breast Self-Examination.

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer and the chief cause of cancer death among females. Early detection of breast cancer aids in early treatment and thereby reducing cancer related mortality. The screening methods for breast cancer include: breast self-examination, clinical breast exam and mammography. Mammography is the effective screening method as per WHO.^[1]

Breast self-examination (BSE) is a screening method that people perform the procedures on their own in an attempt to detect early breast cancer. Breast self-examination is easy to perform and cheap but despite these the rate of practice of breast self-examination is low and varies in different countries. Studies have cited the reasons for the low practice of breast self-examination which is as a result of inadequate knowledge of breast self-examination, lack of time, lack of self-confidence in their ability to perform the technique correctly, fear of possible discovery of a lump, and embarrassment associated with handling of the breast.^[2] Social changes such as delayed marriage, lower fertility, decreased span of breastfeeding and the lifestyle changes increase the

risk of breast cancer.^[3] Breast self-examination is often carried out once in a month, between the 7th and 10th day of the menstrual cycle, to detect breast cancer at the early stages of growth thereby ensuring a better prognosis when treated. Early detection of cancer improves the quality of life of patients and chance of survival.^[4]

This study is aimed to evaluate the practice of women in Thiruvananthapuram of South Kerala regarding breast self-examination.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was a cross-sectional observational study using a self-administered questionnaire. Population in this study was all women in age group of 20 - 60 years in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. Data was collected from 233 women in age group of 20 - 60 years, but only 226 responses were included in our study since 7 responses were incomplete. Participant must be in age group of 20 - 60 years. Women in age group of below 20 years and above 60 years were excluded from the study.

Demographics section was developed to describe characteristics of women and confirm inclusion criteria of sampling. This section includes three main questions about personal background, occupation, family history and sources of information gathered.

Practice section aims to investigate practice of breast self-examination among women according to their knowledge and attitudes. In this section, 10 items were used to measure the practice of breast self-examination among women. Completed surveys were coded, reviewed for accuracy and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 13.0 and R Software 4.5.1).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Written informed consent was obtained and clearance for the study was obtained from the scientific and ethical committee constituted in Ezhuthachan College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Marayamuttom, Neyyattinkara and Thiruvananthapuram.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic characteristics

A total 233 women were contacted through mail, social media and friends and requested to fill out the questionnaire through the Google form. A total of 233 responses were collected, of which 226 responses were completed and used for analysis. Out of these respondents, 174 (76.9%) were students, 35 (15.4%) were employee and 17 (7.7%) were housewife. Majority of the participants 183 (80.8%) were single. 17 (7.7%) participants reported having history of breast cancer and 104 (46.2%) participants reported they were gathered information from internet. (Table 1).

Practice of breast self-examination

From the result it was evident that 53.8% of respondents perform BSE and the reason for not performing was they don't have any problem and was unaware of the need. 80.8% says that reason for performing BSE is to diagnose breast cancer at early stage. 38.5% of participants perform BSE by feeling the breast with hand. 53.8% perform BSE annually. 76.9% of the participants see physician if there is any abnormality. (Table 2)

Table 1: Socio-demographic details.

Socio-Demographic Details	Frequency(n=226)	Percentage (%)
Age		
○ 20 – 30	217	96.2
○ 31 – 40	9	3.8
○ 41 – 50	0	0
○ 51 – 60	0	0
Marital status		
○ Single	183	80.8
○ Married	35	15.4
○ Divorced	0	0
○ Widowed	8	3.8
Occupation		
○ Employee	35	15.4
○ House wife	17	7.7
○ Student	174	76.9
History of breast cancer in family		
○ Present	17	7.7
○ Absent	209	92.3
Sources of information		
○ Friends	52	23.1
○ Family member	17	7.7
○ Doctor	9	3.8
○ Newspaper	9	3.8
○ Television	35	15.4
○ Internet	104	46.2
○ Social campaign	0	0

Table 2: Practice of breast self-examination.

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
P1: Do you practice breast self-examination:		
○ Yes	122	53.8
○ No	104	46.2
P2: If not, what is the reason		
○ Unaware of the need	70	30.8
○ Don't have any breast problems	70	30.8
○ Don't know how to do BSE	17	7.7
○ Don't think I should	17	7.7
○ Others	52	23.1
P3: What is the reason for performing BSE:		
○ To diagnose breast cancer at early stage,if any	183	80.8
○ I have family history of breast cancer	17	7.7
○ I just feel like doing it.	26	11.5
P4: How often do you perform BSE:		
○ Monthly	52	23.1
○ Every 6 month	9	3.8
○ Annually	17	7.7
○ When it comes to my mind	122	53.8
○ Within 2-3 days after a session of menstruation	9	3.8
○ Few days before menstruation starts	17	7.7
P5: When did you last done the BSE:		
○ Between 3-6 months ago	14	7.7
○ Between 6 month – 1yr ago	14	7.7
○ Less than a month ago	104	46.2
○ More than a year	8	38.5
P6: How do you perform BSE:		
○ Inspecting the breast in the mirror	52	23.1
○ Feeling the breast with hand	88	38.5
○ Feeling the armpit with hand	0	0
○ During shower	78	34.6
○ On the bed lying down	8	3.8
P7: What will you do if there is any abnormality in BSE:		
○ Leave it to God and pray	26	11.5
○ See a physician	174	76.9
○ Do nothing	26	11.5
P8: How you perform BSE in front of mirror:		
○ Place hand on hip, press down & make the chest muscle tense	35	15.4
○ Raise the arm above/behind the head	35	15.4
○ Squeeze each nipple gently for any discharge	9	3.8
○ Start with arms at sides	26	11.5
○ All of the above	121	53.8
P9: How do you perform BSE during shower:		
○ Start by raising arm behind head	43	19.2
○ Use the pad of the hand to examine the breast	35	15.4
○ Use soapy hand to press firmly on the breast against the chest wall	52	23.1
○ All of the above	96	42.3
P10: How do you perform BSE on bed lying down:		
○ Place a pillow under the shoulder of the side to be examined	52	23.1
○ Use lip of the hand to examine the breast.	52	23.1
○ All of the above	122	53.8

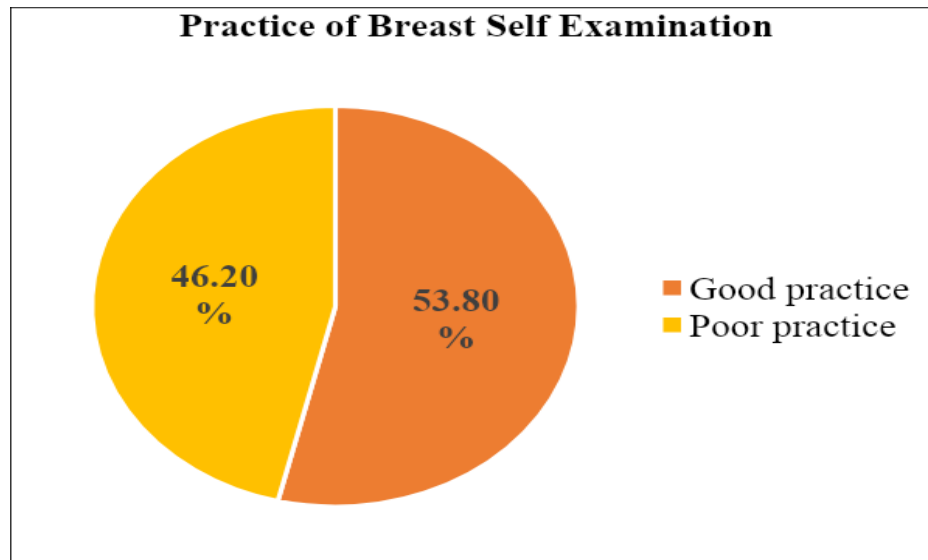


Figure 1: Practice of breast self-examination.

DISCUSSION

Breast cancer is one of the leading causes of death as it is detected in the late stages in India. Lack of awareness regarding the risk factors and breast self-examination acts as the causing factor for late diagnosis. In our study majority of participants (53.8%) practice BSE and only 3.8% of the participants perform it every 6 month it is similar to the results of study conducted by Chepkwuri Joyce et al.^[1] where 41.4% of the participants had never done so and 32.6% of those who had ever practiced Breast Self-Examination reported that they last did it a month ago. Only 16.9% of this reported that they do BSE monthly while the practice among 33.7% respondents was depended on when they remembered to do it or whenever they felt unwell. In our study majority is aware of various BSE practices it is similar to the result of Aminah Allohaib et al.^[12] where 69.6% of participants knowing how to do a self-examination.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed a larger proportion of respondents have good practice of breast self-examination (BSE). This study points to the fact that there is an urgent need for continuous awareness and sensitization programs in the communities, as well as the review of high school subject curriculum to include breast self-examination (BSE) teaching and practice & general sexual and reproductive health programs. There is need for the development of more efficient educational programs aiming at demonstrations of the correct procedures of breast self- examination (BSE) so as to enhance early detection of breast cancer and proffer prompt treatments to reduce the mortality rate of the breast cancer.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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