

Breast Cancer Awareness

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Although largely confined to Western countries in the past, breast cancer incidence is increasing also in developing countries. Recent rise in Asia breast cancer has seemed weighted toward the both young and elderly. If caught in early stages, breast cancer can be treated effectively. If caught late, it is often fatal.

Breast cancer can present with lump that feels different from the rest of the breast tissue, swelling of the breast, nipple discharge, rash on the nipple, and pain in the breast.

Knowledge among the general public has not risen as fast as incidence in the developing areas. There are lack of health education and misunderstanding.

Breast cancer often present in late stage in developing countries and causes stigma.

Early diagnosis is important. If identified early, cancer is more likely to respond to effective treatment with greater probability of surviving, less morbidity, and less expensive treatment.

Early diagnosis consists of 3 steps that must be integrated and provided in a timely manner:

1. awareness and accessing care.
2. clinical evaluation, diagnosis and staging.
3. access to treatment.

Screening

There is no single one-size-fit-all screening strategy for breast cancer.

Mammography-based screening requires to achieve a high participation rate.

Here are common screening strategies:

1. Opportunistic mammogram.
2. A population-wide programme.
3. Population-wide regular clinical breast examination (CBE).

Awareness

Breast cancer is often regarded as something scary or even dirty; women are reluctant to talk about it.

In Buddhist countries, there is a sense that the disease is somehow the patient's fault for misdeeds in a previous life. These misunderstandings delay in getting medical attention.

A total of 225 patients of Ca breast were admitted to general surgical wards of YGH and NYGH in 2013. Among them, 105 patients present with locally advanced carcinoma of the breast (46.66%).

About 15% of breast cancer patients present with advanced stage in 2018 and 2019, in YGH.

Women should do regular self-breast examination. They should aware of breasts and breast cancer. Women should know when to consult general practitioners. General practitioners should refer patients urgently if the followings are present.

Definite signs of cancer such as

1. Ulceration.
2. Skin nodule.
3. Skin distortion.

Breast cancer is common among women. Awareness among population leads to early recognition of symptoms. Reducing stigma leads to early seeking of professional care. Awareness of breast cancer among doctors and health workers leads to early diagnosis.

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