

A Study on Awareness of Breast Cancer among Nursing Students

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Abstract

Background: Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in women worldwide and its incidence is increasing in many countries. Breast cancer could happen to any woman irrespective of her education, social or cultural background. The lack of knowledge and incorrect perception about breast cancer prevention among females are responsible for the negative perception of the curability of cancer detected early and of the efficacy of the screening tests. It is, therefore, important to assess the level of awareness of risk factors in our communities. Therefore the present study is aimed to assess the awareness of breast cancer among nursing students.

Methods: The present cross-sectional study was conducted among nursing students of SAVEETHA MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL, CHENNAI. A total of 150 nursing students were included in the study with their prior consent. The study period was from 21 st January 2019 to 30 the March 2019.

Results: Our results showed insufficient knowledge of breast cancer among nursing students eventhough majority of them have heard of it. The results indicated the need for increased breast cancer awareness among university students.

Conclusions: Our study participants did not have adequate knowledge on risk factors and symptoms of breast cancer .The implications of this study are to emphasize the need to teach nursing students breast cancer awareness and detection of breast cancer in the early stage their undergraduate courses

Keywords: Breast cancer awareness, Nursing students, knowledge, Consequences, Attitude.

Introduction

Cancer is becoming a leading cause of death worldwide ^[1]. Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in women worldwide and its incidence is increasing in many countries ^[2]. It is also the second leading cause of cancer death in women after lung cancer. Breast cancer could happen to any woman irrespective of her education, social or cultural background ^[3]. Breast cancer occurs when there is abnormal breast cells growth. Most common breast cancers include invasive

ductal carcinoma and invasive lobular carcinoma or in other cells or tissue within the breast. Breast cancer signs may include a lump in the breast, a change in breast shape, dimpling of the skin, fluid coming from the nipple, a newly inverted nipple, or a red or scaly patch of skin.

According to the World Health Organization report in the year , it is estimated that worldwide over 508 000 women died in 2011 due to breast cancer ^[4]. Almost 70% of women with breast cancer are aged over 50 years, and only 5% are younger than 40 years old ^[5]. There is marked geographical variation in incidence rates, being highest in the developed world and lowest in the developing countries in Asia, Middle East, and Africa. The global incidence of breast cancer is rising, particularly in developing countries that formerly had a low incidence ^[6]. The incidence of breast cancer is

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increasing due to increase life expectancy, increase urbanization and adoption of western lifestyles in the developing world.

Therefore, it is important that emphasis on prevention and early diagnosis of breast cancer are employed everywhere. One of the major difficulties regarding breast cancer relates to the lack of patients' awareness about the disease. The negative perception of the curability of cancer detected early and of the efficacy of the screening tests are due to the lack of knowledge and incorrectly held beliefs about breast cancer prevention among females. It is, therefore, important to assess the level of awareness of risk factors in our communities. The survival rates of breast cancer have increased, and the number of deaths associated with this disease is steadily declining, largely due to factors such as earlier detection, a better approach to treatment and a better understanding of the disease. Breast cancer can be detected at an early stage through a combination of monthly breast self-examination (BSE), regular clinical breast examinations and annual mammography beginning at the age of 40 years, are the best ways to limit morbidity and mortality associated with breast cancer [6]. Early detection of breast abnormality is an essential factor. This is a challenge for health care professionals, especially nurses; contribute a crucial role in providing breast cancer awareness to women. Nursing students are the future nurses who will have the opportunity to encourage and influence women to be breast aware [3]. Therefore this study is aimed to assess the awareness of breast cancer among nursing students.

Materials and Method

This study was conducted among nursing students of SAVEETHA MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL, CHENNAI. A total of 150 nursing students were included in the study with their prior consent. The study period was from 21st January 2019 to 30 the March 2019. Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) clearance was applied for and obtained. All the participants who took part in the study were briefed on the study's purpose, and requested to participate in it. The questionnaires were distributed after describing the purpose of the study. The participants were assured that participation was voluntary, and confidentiality would be maintained. The study was done by using a cross sectional and a semi-structured questionnaire which included questions related to

1. Awareness regarding breast cancer
2. Knowledge regarding breast cancer.
3. Attitude towards risk factors for breast cancer.

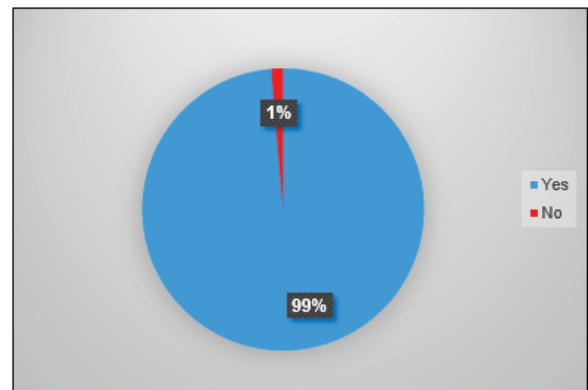
Informed consent was obtained from the study participants. After collecting data, the data was edited and tabulated on Microsoft excel sheet before data analysis. The data was then analyzed and the percentage were obtained and chi square test was applied.

Results

In total, 150 nursing students were studied, ranging from 1st year to final year nursing of age 17-22 years; the mean age being 18.73. Out of 150 participants, 127(84.7%) belong to < 20 years and 23(15.3%) belong to > 20 years .32(21.3%) belong to 1st year,102(68%) belong to 2nd year, 7(4.6%) belong to 3rd year and 9 (6%) belong to final year.

Out of 150 participants, 148 (98.6%) have heard of breast cancer and 2 (1.4%). Out of which 78 (52%) have heard of breast cancer through books, 43 (28.6%) through media, 22 (14.6%) through hospital, 5(3.3%) through conferences and remaining through friends and other sources. (Refer fig 1 & table 1)

NURSING STUDENTS WHO HAVE HEARD OF BREAST CANCER



(Fig 1)

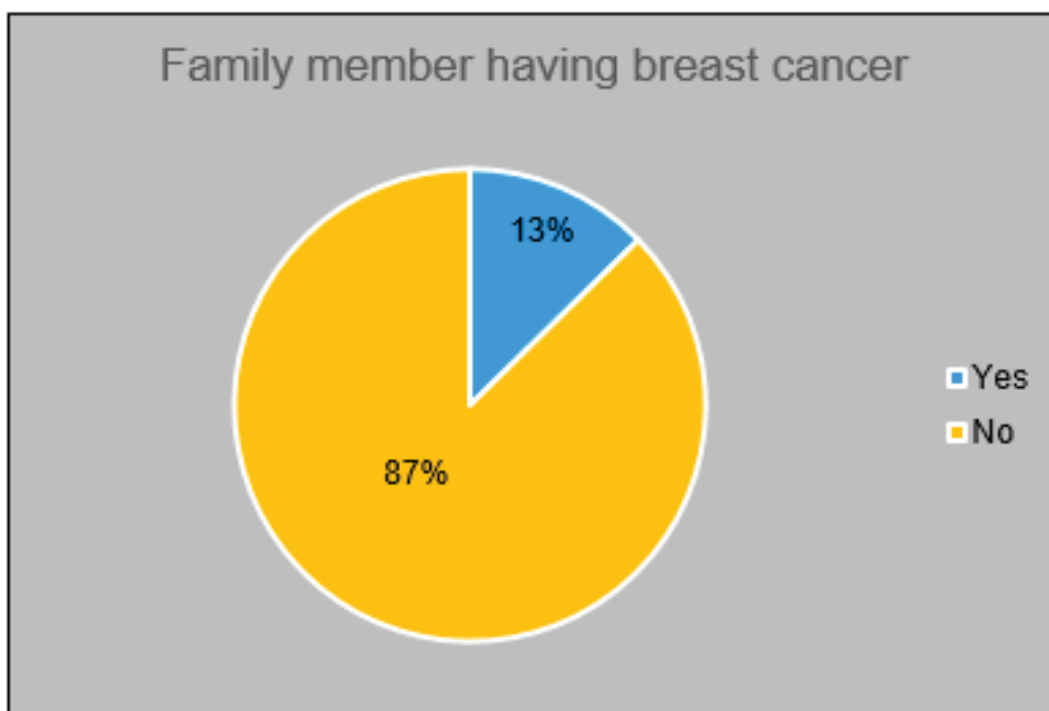
VARIOUS SOURCES OF INFORMATION OF BREAST CANCER

SOURCE OF INFORMATION OF BREAST CANCER	PERCENTAGE
Books	78
Media	43
Hospital	22
Conference	5
Friends	1
Others	1

(TABLE 1)

Out of 150 participants, 19(12.6%) have family members suffering from breast cancer and 131(87.4%) do not have family members suffering from breast cancer. (Refer fig 2)

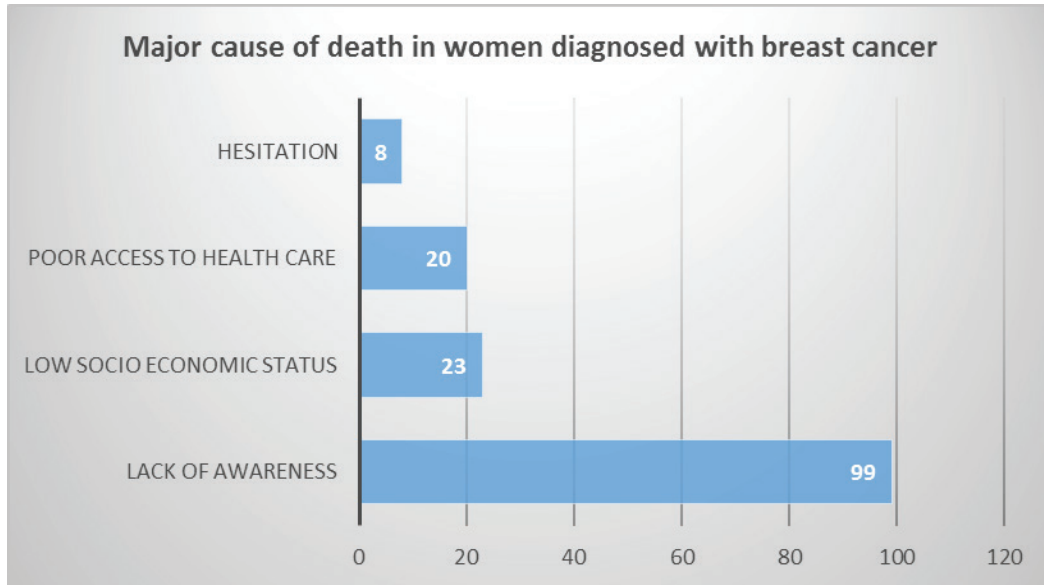
FAMILY MEMBER OF NURSING STUDENT HAVING BREAST CANCER



(Fig 2)

Out of 150 participants, major cause of death in women diagnosed with breast cancer was thought to be due to lack of awareness by 99(66%), due to low socio economic status by 23(15.3%), due to poor access to health care by 20(13.3%), due to hesitation by 8 (5.3%).(Refer fig 3)

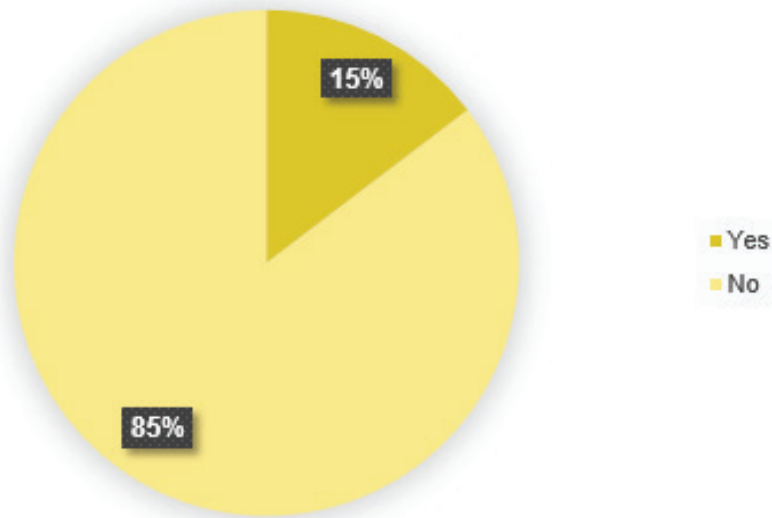
MAJOR CAUSE OF DEATH IN WOMEN DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER



(Fig 3)

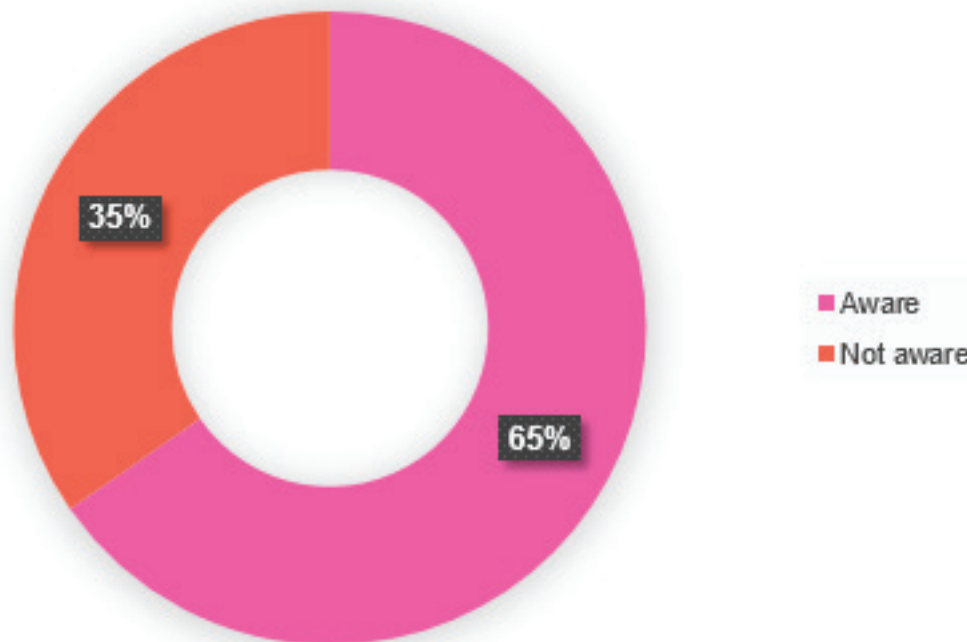
Out of 150 participants, 22(14.7%) have attended breast cancer awareness programme and 128(85.3%) have not attended breast cancer awareness programme. 98(65.4%) were aware and 52(34.6%) were not aware of consequences of breast cancer if left untreated. (Refer fig 4 & 5)

STUDENTS WHO HAVE ATTENDED BREAST CANCER AWARENESS PROGRAM



(Fig 4)

CONSEQUENCES OF BREAST CANCER IF LEFT UNTREATED



(Fig 5)

Discussion

Breast Cancer is the **most common cancer** in women in India [7]. Breast cancer is overlooked by many till a near and dear one suffers from it. So this results in most people presenting only when symptomatic, and on an average, most 'symptomatic' cancers are stage 2B and beyond (significant numbers in stages 3 and 4). So the breast cancer patients tend to survive for shorter time than their western counterparts. In the Western countries, most of the breast cancers (read more than 75%) present in stages 1 and 2, resulting in good survival; and there is an ever increasing numbers of patients presenting with mammography detected cancer, with no symptoms. India has to reach this achievement, and it is only with aggressive promotion of screening and awareness and proper treatment that India will achieve this; and will take at least a few decades to reproduce similar results [8]. The main focus of the study was to assess breast cancer awareness and knowledge among university students.

The evaluation of public awareness, attitudes and practice of BSE is of important for the successful implementation of breast cancer control activities. There are no known proven means to prevent breast cancer,

which increases our reliance on the methods for early detection in order to improve patient outcomes. The main motive of breast cancer awareness program is to promote and develop awareness about the importance of its early detection. Our overall results, projected a general lack of breast cancer awareness and knowledge among university students irrespective of their gender, marital status, years in university and nature of high school attended even though 148(99%) have heard of it. In the current study, of the 148 participants who have heard of breast cancer, 52% obtained their information through books and only less than 1% obtained their information from friends which is in contrast to the study conducted among female Jordanian students in which 51.8% obtained their information from friends [6]. This may be due to hesitation among the students.

In contrast to a study done by Mafuvadze et al who reported 72% of university students reporting knowledge of someone with breast cancer in the USA, in our study, less than 15% of participants reported knowledge of someone with breast cancer [9]. Our study similar to study among female Jordanian students showed that more than 80% participants were aware that BSE might help in early detection of breast cancer [6]. Our study showed

that only 14.7% has attended breast cancer awareness program and more than 85% have not attended any such programs. This might also be the reason for increased incidence of breast cancer. Therefore, more breast cancer awareness programs should be developed in universities including lectures, seminars, workshops and on hands training.

Conclusion

Our study participants did not have adequate knowledge on risk factors and symptoms of BC. However, the knowledge about prevention and early detection was observed among majority with a healthy attitude among nurses towards BC

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Our study participants did not have adequate knowledge on risk factors and symptoms of breast cancer. This study shows the need to teach nursing students about the breast cancer awareness and early detection of breast cancer in their undergraduate courses. In addition, the provision of regular programs are necessary to increase and build up the confidence and skills of nursing students in BSE. This is the primary step toward increasing awareness about breast cancer and encourages early adoption of breast screening initiatives. Such workshops are recommended for the nurses working in primary

health care settings. The nurses would be the advocates to promote breast awareness and BSE among people and it is important that they should be aware.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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Ethical Clearance: Obtained

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