



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 8.4
IJAR 2021; 7(3): 367-369
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 04-01-2021
Accepted: 19-02-2021

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A study on awareness and knowledge of cervical cancer among females at selected colleges of Bangalore, Karnataka

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Abstract

Background of the study: Cancer is a disease in which the normal mechanisms for growth and proliferation of cell have been altered. In worldwide, carcinoma of the cervix is the second most common cancer in women. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, there would be highest incidence rate for all cancers where more than quite 8.8 lakh deaths attributed to cancers by the year 2020, with cancer of breast, lung and cervix being the highest. The highest incidences of cancers were reported from north-east regions of India for both males and females. In India, the incidence of cancer is higher in women than in men, whereas globally it is higher in men than in women.

Objectives

- To assess the level of knowledge and awareness of cervical cancer among women in selected colleges of Bangalore.
- To determine the association between knowledge on cervical cancer and selected demographic variables.

Methods: The study was done to assess the awareness and knowledge of cervical cancer among females at selected colleges of Bangalore, Karnataka. This was a descriptive study which comprises of 96 women participants of age group (20-50 years), selected by non-probability convenient sampling method. Data were collected by using a self-administered questionnaire which addressed questions on socio-demographic data and knowledge of cervical cancer prepared by the investigator. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: The results showed insufficient knowledge of cervical cancer among the participants. The majority of the participants were unaware of common symptoms of cervical cancer and also, they were not aware of Pap smear test. Overall, most of the participants indicated the necessity for increased cervical cancer awareness among the females.

Conclusion: Deaths resulting from cervical cancer are tragic. Awareness regarding cervical cancer and its prevention is relatively low amongst Indian women. Adequate knowledge of cervical cancer can reduce morbidity and mortality related to the disease. Therefore, it is important to impart adequate knowledge among women so that the morbidity and mortality related to the disease can be reduced.

Keywords: Awareness, knowledge, cervical cancer, PAP smear

Introduction

Cancer is a chronic disease characterized by unrestrained and unregulated growth of cells. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), cases of cervical cancer are increasing in India. The female body is one of the most wonderful and complex creations of the nature. It is the origin of all human life. A woman's journey in life is marked by many milestones; childhood, puberty, matrimony, pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood and every milestone special in its own way.

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in females worldwide and is one of the most important causes of premature death in women of reproductive age. Even in most of the developing countries it is the most common cause of cancer-related mortality in women.

According to a recent study the burden of cancer of cervix is growing rapidly in India. In the year 2011, approximately 96,156 cases were detected and the estimated number of cases for the year 2026 is predicted to be 148,813. Usually, women with cervical cancer are ignorant of symptoms, especially in the early stages. Therefore, the clinical features of malignancy in late-stage is vaginal bleeding, invasion, metastasis and poor prognosis.

Moreover, cervical cancer also increases economic risk, which imposes very direct costs on health systems, communities, households and results in premature death and disability. There are various tests and methods have been provided to early diagnosis of cervical cancer among which Pap smear is one of the most significant screening tests for reduction of incidence and mortality from cervical cancer and many developing countries fail to obtain high coverage of target population. The pap smear test detects precancerous cell change on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately.

Early detection and screening significantly decrease the death rates from cancers. Education of public is essential to provide realistic attitudes about cancer and cancer treatment. So, the health care provider should provide the information, education and communication at all level of delivery towards cervical cancer screening.

Methods

The research approach selected for the study was quantitative approach with descriptive design. The study was conducted in two settings --- NMKRV PU College for women and NMKRV Degree College for women, Jayanagar 3rd Block, Bangalore. Data was collected by using non-probability convenient sampling method. A formal permission was obtained from the Principals of both the colleges. A total of 96 female participants between the age group of 21 and above 50 years participated in the study. A self-administered pretest questionnaire was used to collect the relevant details. Care was also taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the participants. An awareness talk was given about cervical cancer and video and a PowerPoint presentation were done about pap smear test. After the health education session, post test questionnaire was administered to the students. The data of pre-test and post-test were collected and analyzed using SPSS.

Sample Size: The sample size was 96 female participants.

Sampling technique

Non probability convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample.

Tool for data collection

The tool was developed by the researcher which consists of two sections

Section-I addressed the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Section-II addressed questionnaire on knowledge of cervical cancer.

Method of data collection

Data was collected by using structured questionnaire.

Procedure for data collection

Prior consent was obtained from the participants before the interview. The participants were explained about the purpose of the study and ensured the anonymity and confidentiality and written consent was obtained from them. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants and were instructed to choose only one answer from the options given under each question and circle it clearly.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed and interpreted as per the objectives of the study by using descriptive and inferential

statistical methods. Reliability of the tool was elicited by using test-retest method by using Pearson's correlation coefficient and it was found to be $r = 0.88$ which was reliable. Association between categorical variables was explored using Chi-square. $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results

Pretest and posttest were collected from 96 participants. The age of the study participants was ranged between 20 and 50 years. Majority of the participants are ignorant about the common symptoms of cervical cancer. It is surprising to know that only 16% of women knew about pap smear test. The mean pretest knowledge score for cervical cancer for NMKRV PU College was 5.72 ($P < 0.001$). The mean pretest knowledge score for cervical cancer for NMKRV Degree College was 5.37 ($P < 0.001$).

After the health talk session, the level of knowledge regarding cervical cancer was increased considerably. The knowledge about the common symptoms of cervical cancer was improved after the awareness program. The mean posttest knowledge score for cervical cancer for NMKRV PU College was 10.17 ($P < 0.001$). The mean posttest knowledge score for cervical cancer for NMKRV Degree College was 9.80 ($P < 0.001$).

Discussion

The study revealed that the participants are having average knowledge on cervical cancer. However, the knowledge regarding common symptoms of cervical cancer and pap smear test was poor. The findings showed that majority of participants are ignorant about pap smear test and had never screened for cervical cancer. The study shows that there was no significant association of knowledge with the selected demographic variables. Special awareness programs, seminars, training courses and workshops should be conducted at educational institutes regularly. Knowledge regarding cervical cancer is important not only for their own good health but also to disseminate the knowledge to others.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the awareness of cervical cancer among the participants was low. Cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage if women are well aware of the early signs and symptoms. The timely detection of cervical cancer can lead to better opportunities of cost-effective treatment and increased chances of survival. Hence, there is a need for more effective health education programmes among the women population so that they can share the knowledge to the other section of the society.

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