

Knowledge, attitude, and practice of breast self-examination among female staff in selected divisional secretariats of the Jaffna district

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Background and objective: Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in Sri Lanka with a relatively high incidence in the Jaffna district. Though mammography is the gold standard for screening, 'breast self-examination' is helpful in early detection where mammography is not widely available. The purpose of this study was to describe the knowledge, attitude, and practice of breast self-examination and their associated factors among female staff in selected divisional secretariats in the Jaffna district.

Methods: This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 275 female staff in Nallur, Vadamaradchi South-West and Jaffna Divisional Secretariats in the Jaffna district using a self-administered questionnaire. Scores were assigned to individual questions related to knowledge and a composite score was developed. Data were entered in Epidata and analyzed using SPSS software.

Results: The majority of participants were 35 years or above (55.3%, n=152), married (78.5%, 216), premenopausal (92.7%, n=255) and had not attended an awareness programme on breast cancer (53.5%, n=147). Among the participants, 60.7% had knowledge about breast self-examination and 38.6% were aware of the suitable period for breast self-examination. Forty percent of the sample performed breast self-examination monthly. Attendance of participants in awareness programmes was associated with positive attitudes towards breast self-examination (p=0.013).

Conclusion: This study shows that although women in the Jaffna district know about breast self-examination, few are aware of the details or perform breast self-examination monthly. Awareness programmes on breast self-examination may be helpful to motivate the public.

Keywords: Breast Self-Examination, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice