

Abstract 37:

Awareness on breast self-examination among school teachers in Nallur Division

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Background and objectives: Breast cancer is a significant health issue in Sri Lanka. In 2022, breast cancer accounted for 26% of all cancer cases among females in Sri Lanka, with 4,555 new cases reported. The age-standardized incidence rate for breast cancer was 27.3 per 100,000 population. This study aims to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding breast self-examination (BSE) among female school teachers in the Nallur Division. Additionally, it examines the socio-demographic factors influencing BSE knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among 600 female teachers in the Nallur Division, with a response rate of 74.5% (447 participants). Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires. The participants' overall knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding BSE were evaluated, along with the association of these factors with socio-demographic characteristics. The chi-square test was used to analyse the data.

Results: The study found that 71.6% of participants had knowledge of BSE, but only 47.5% were aware of the correct time to perform it. Additionally, 47.7% practiced BSE monthly. A positive correlation was observed between a higher level of education and a positive attitude towards BSE ($p < 0.001$). Despite a high level of awareness, few participants knew the appropriate age and frequency for starting BSE. Knowledge of BSE was higher among married teachers and increased with higher education levels. Among the teachers who practice breast self-examination, 42 of them (13.1%) do it monthly as they knew the correct time interval

Conclusions and recommendations: Although most teachers were aware of BSE, gaps in knowledge regarding the correct timing and frequency of the practice were evident. Less than half performed BSE regularly. The study underscores the need for more comprehensive educational programs to improve BSE practice, as raising awareness alone is insufficient for consistent and accurate practice.

Keywords: Breast self-examination, knowledge, attitude, practice, breast cancer awareness