
Students' Corner

Letter to the Editor

The necessity of awareness of Breast Cancer amongst women in Pakistan

Madam, Breast Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. According to WHO estimates it represents 10% of all cancers diagnosed worldwide and constituted 22% of all new cancers in 2000 in women making it the most common cancer in females.¹

Pakistan alone has the highest rate of Breast Cancer than any other Asian country as approximately 90000 new cases are diagnosed every year out of which 40000 die. According to a research conducted approximately 1 out of every 9 women are likely to suffer from this disease at any point in their lives and about 77% of invasive breast cancer occurred in women above 50 years, but if diagnosed early the survival rates approach 90%.²

Mortality in Breast cancer can be prevented in 1/3rd of women if routine mammography is done in women over 50 years, hence the longer a woman lives the lower is her risk of breast cancer therefore a 50 year old woman who has not had breast cancer has 11% chance of having it, whereas a 70 year old woman who has not had breast cancer has 7% chance of having it.³

BRCA1 and BRCA2 are the two most major breast cancer-susceptibility genes identified and testing for mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2 is an important tool for predicting breast cancer. Besides that lack of breast feeding, diet, less parity and smoking are most significantly associated with breast cancer in patients.⁴

Therefore a short breast examination can prevent this

cancer and protect women from this most horrifying and horrendous nightmare.

The above mentioned facts highlight it beyond any doubt that breast cancer causes significant mortality in Pakistan. Hence the government should create widespread awareness in Pakistan. The focus of the awareness should be about:

1. The dangerously high incidence of breast cancer in Pakistan.
2. The disease is not fatal and is curable.
3. It can be detected early if routine breast examination is done.
4. The life after this cancer is same as before the diagnosis and is worth living.

This can significantly control the burden of disease in a developing country like Pakistan with a paucity of financial resources.

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