Original Research Article

AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS ABOUT SELF-EXAMINATION OF THE BREAST

TAHIRA Y*, NAZAR K, PARVEEN T

College of Nursing, Nishter Medical University, and Hospital (NMU & H) Multan, Pakistan
*Correspondence author email address: drmaria123@yahoo.com

Abstract: *This study aimed to evaluate the attitudes and knowledge of BSN nurses regarding breast self-examination. A cross-sectional study was conducted in the Nursing Department of Nishtar Medical Hospital, Multan, from March 2018 to May 2018. A total of 100 BSN nursing students were included in the study. The participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire consisting of 40 questions about demographic information, knowledge about breast self-exam, their attitude regarding such practices, and practice of self-exam, which could be answered by selecting yes or no. The average mean score of knowledge regarding the BSE among the BScN students was 60.12 ± 18.3. 40 % were correct about the steps of BSE, and 60 % were unclear. Only 20 participants reported that they practiced a self-exam, while 80 respondents did not perform it. A positive attitude towards self-exam was seen as all the participants agreed that all women should perform the exam. Women have poor knowledge and practice about breast self-exam; however, awareness through digital media can improve and promote this practice.*

Keywords: Breast Cancer, Breast Self-Examination, Women, Awareness

Introduction

Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer found in young women in Pakistan. It is the second leading cause of mortality among all cancer deaths (Soomro et al., 2018). Every 1 in 9 women has breast cancer (Begum, 2018). Obesity and aversion to nursing babies are the major causes of breast cancer.

In Pakistan, women's lack of knowledge and awareness is the main cause of increasing cases. It is considered taboo to discuss women's issues; hence Pakistan has the highest rate of breast cancer in Asia (Saeed et al., 2021). Breast self-examination is a procedure examining one's breasts to detect changes in shape, size, or structure. A person uses her fingers to look for lumps or changes in upright and lying position and can use a mirror to note appearance. This method is preferable for women in their 20s.

Breast self-exam plays an important role in the early diagnosis and prognosis of cancer. In developed and undeveloped countries, little awareness is raised on this topic, leading to late diagnosis and, eventually, mastectomy in most cases (Awan and Abid, 2018). This study evaluated the attitudes and knowledge of BSN nurses regarding breast self-examination.

Methodology

A cross-sectional study was conducted in the Nursing Department of Nishtar Medical Hospital, Multan, from March 2018 to May 2018. A total of 100 BSN nursing students were included in the study. All the participants provided their consent to become a part of the study. The ethical board of the hospital approved the study design.

The participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire consisting of 40 questions which could be answered by selecting yes or no. The questionnaire was divided into three sections concerning demographic information, knowledge about breast self-exam, their attitude regarding such practices, and practice of self-exam. The responses were kept anonymous.

Data analysis was carried out based on the responses to the questions. Each factor was characterized to identify the most appropriate KAP of BSE. The numerical data was first coded in the process of office editing. These were then entered into MS Excel and transformed into SPSS version 21.0 for descriptive analysis. The analysis was presented in the form of frequencies and percentages. After verifying documents /records from the participants, a sequential listing of events was also carried out.

Results

The average age of participants was 21.5 years. 98% of the respondents were unmarried, and 2% were married. Most parents were educated, and most were working in non-health-related professions. Of the 100 respondents, a family health history related to the breast problem was found in 21%. Regarding the choice of participants for their breast issues, most participants (n = 100) strongly expressed no problem in their personal health history, and 69% indicated regular menstrual periods (Table I).

The average mean score of knowledge regarding the BSE among the BScN students was 60.12 ± 18.3. According to 70% of participants, the ideal age for breast exams was 25 years. 75% had mentioned that the appropriate time for BSE was the 5th to seventh day after menses, 18% had told any time, and 7% selected before & during menstruation. 40 % were correct about the steps of BSE, and 60 % were unclear (Table II).

A positive attitude towards self-exam was seen as all the participants agreed that all women should perform the exam, and almost all the women were interested and motivated to perform the exam (80% and 95%, respectively) (Table III).

Only 20 participants reported that they practiced a self-exam, while 80 respondents did not perform it (Table IV).

Table I: Demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years		
14 – 20	34	34%
20-25	66	66 %
Year of Study		
1st year	25	25 %
2nd year	25	25 %
3rd year	25	25 %
4th year	25	25 %
Marital Status		
Married	3	3 %
Unmarried	97	97 %
Mother's Education		
Illiterate	34	34 %
Educated	66	66 %
Father's education		
Illiterate	40	40 %
Educated	60	60 %
Father's profession		
Health-related	34	34 %
Not health related	66	66 %
Mother's profession		
Health-related	25	25 %
Not health related	75	25 %
Family history of BC		
Yes	22	22 %
No	78	78 %
Regular Menstrual cycle		
Yes	69	69 %
No	31	31 %

Table II: Knowledge about breast self-examination

	Frequency	Percentage
The ideal age for self-examination		
20	10	10%
25	70	70%
30	10	10%
35	10	10%

Appropriate time		
5-7 days after menstruation	75	75%
Any time	18	18%
Before and during menstruation	7	7%
Correct knowledge of the steps of the exam		
Yes	40	40%
No	60	60%
Position of exam		
Standing	76	76%
Sitting	3	3%
Laying down	16	16%
Leaning forward	5	5%
Duration of the exam on each breast		
10 minutes	2	2%
7 minutes	15	15%
5 minutes	40	40%
2 minutes	43	43%

Table III: Attitude toward breast self-examination

	Frequency	Percentage
Interested in breast self-examination		
Yes	80	80%
No	20	20%
A breast exam is useless.		
Yes	0	0%
No	100	100%
A breast exam is disgraceful.		
Yes	30	30%
No	70	70%
Cannot do breast exam every month		
Yes	50	50%
No	50	50%
All women should do a breast exam.		
Yes	100	100%
No	0	0%
Not afraid to think about breast cancer		
Yes	10	10%
No	90	90%
Avoid breast exams as I am worried about having breast cancer.		
Yes	45	45%
No	55	55%
Discusses breast exam with friends		
Yes	80	80%
No	20	20%
Motivates women to perform a breast exam		
Yes	95	95%
No	5	5%

Table IV: Practice of breast self-examination

Practiced self-exam	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	20%
No	80	80%

Discussion

We conducted a study to analyze the knowledge and attitude of nursing students regarding breast self-

examination. We found poor knowledge about self-exam in adolescent girls; however, their attitudes regarding learning and practicing more were promising.

The average age of participants in our study was 21.5 years. Other studies on breast self-exam knowledge also included females of comparable age (Abay et al., 2018; Albeshan et al., 2020).

70% of the participants believed 25 years was the best age to start a self-exam, which was wrong. This indicated poor knowledge among most of the women. This rate was comparable to our study in an underdeveloped country like Ethiopia. 32.2% of women were aware of the ideal age of self-exam (Getu et al., 2018). Only 40 women (40%) were aware of the procedure of BSE. In a developed country like Malaysia, 51% of women were unaware of the steps of BSE, which showed poor awareness (Ali et al., 2020).

The attitude regarding learning more about BSE was excellent. Eighty respondents (80%) were interested in self-exam, and all women agreed that everyone should do a self-exam. In other studies where the practice rate was low, the same positive attitude was observed (Alomair et al., 2020; Kalliguddi et al., 2019; Sapountzi-Krepia et al., 2017)

The frequency of self-exam practice was only in 20 respondents (20%), which is alarmingly low than in other countries like 50.8% in Turkey (Beydağ and Yürügen, 2010), 85.5% in Jordan (Suleiman, 2014), and 76% in Ghana (Dadzi and Adam, 2019). A local study in Karachi also shows a 33.3% practice rate among a study population of 1000 students (Ahmed et al., 2018).

Our study has some limitations. We included a limited number of participants from almost the same ethnical backgrounds, which did not allow for diversity in results. A multicenter study with women from different areas may yield better results.

Conclusion

Women have poor knowledge and practice about breast self-exam; however, awareness through digital media can improve and promote this practice.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared absence of conflict of interest.

References

Abay, M., Tuke, G., Zewdie, E., Abraha, T. H., Grum, T., and Brhane, E. (2018). Breast self-examination practice and associated factors among women aged 20–70 years attending public health institutions of Adwa town, North Ethiopia. *BMC research notes* **11**, 1-7.

Ahmed, A., Zahid, I., Ladiwala, Z. F. R., Sheikh, R., and Memon, A. S. (2018). Breast self-examination awareness and practices in young women in developing countries: A survey of female students in Karachi, Pakistan. *Journal of education and health promotion* **7**.

Albeshan, S. M., Hossain, S. Z., Mackey, M. G., and Brennan, P. C. (2020). Can breast self-examination and clinical breast examination along with increasing breast awareness facilitate earlier detection of breast cancer in populations with advanced stages at diagnosis? *Clinical breast cancer* **20**, 194-200.

Ali, A. N., Yuan, F. J., Ying, C. H., and Ahmed, N. Z. (2020). Awareness, knowledge and attitude towards breast self-examination: A cross-sectional Study Among Female Pharmacy Students in Malaysia. *International Research Journal of Oncology* **2**, 180-189.

Alomair, A. N., Felemban, D. G., Felemban, M. S., Awadain, J. A., Altowargi, A., and Alfawzan, N. F. (2020). Knowledge, attitude, and practice of breast self-examination toward breast cancer among female students at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Medicine in Developing Countries* **4**, 429-434.

Awan, N. J., and Abid, S. (2018). Assessment of Knowledge Regarding Breast Self-examination among College Students (Girls) of District Islamabad, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Research* **57**.

Begum, N. (2018). Breast cancer in Pakistan: a looming epidemic. *J Coll Physicians Surg Pak* **28**, 87-8.

Beydağ, K. D., and Yürügen, B. (2010). The effect of breast self-examination (BSE) education given to midwifery students on their knowledge and attitudes. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev* **11**, 1761-1764.

Dadzi, R., and Adam, A. (2019). Assessment of knowledge and practice of breast self-examination among reproductive age women in Akatsi South district of Volta region of Ghana. *PLoS One* **14**, e0226925.

Getu, M. A., Kassaw, M. W., Tlaye, K. G., and Gebrekiristos, A. F. (2018). Assessment of breast self-examination practice and its associated factors among female undergraduate students in Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2016. *Breast Cancer: Targets and Therapy*, 21-28.

Kalliguddi, S., Sharma, S., and Gore, C. A. (2019). Knowledge, attitude, and practice of breast self-examination amongst female IT professionals in Silicon Valley of India. *Journal of family medicine and primary care* **8**, 568.

Saeed, S., Asim, M., and Sohail, M. M. (2021). Fears and barriers: problems in breast cancer diagnosis and treatment in Pakistan. *BMC women's health* **21**, 1-10.

Sapountzi-Krepia, D., Rekleiti, M., Lavdaniti, M., Psychogiou, M., Chaliou, M., Xenofontos, M., and Savva, M. (2017). Evaluating female nursing students' knowledge and attitudes regarding breast self-examination. *Health care for women international* **38**, 786-795.

Soomro, R., Faridi, S., Khurshaidi, N., Zahid, N., and Mamshad, I. (2018). Age and stage of breast cancer in Pakistan: An experience at a tertiary care center. *JPMA. The Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association* **68**, 1682-1685.

Suleiman, A. K. (2014). Awareness and attitudes regarding breast cancer and breast self-examination among female Jordanian students. *Journal of basic and clinical pharmacy* **5**, 74.