

Awareness on Nutrition and Sources of Dietary Information Among Female Breast Cancer Patients at a Tertiary Care Hospital in Sri Lanka

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Breast cancer patients often face dietary challenges following the disease and its treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgeries, or hormonal therapy. Dietary habits influence cancer prognosis and treatment outcomes highlighting the importance of adhering to a healthy lifestyle. However, dietary awareness among breast cancer patients in Sri Lanka remains limited. This study aims to assess the extent of the awareness on nutrition and the sources of dietary information among female breast cancer patients at National Hospital Kandy. This study was a quantitative, cross-sectional study conducted among 385 women diagnosed with breast cancer who were currently undergoing treatment. The convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants and the study was conducted at the oncology clinic of National Hospital Kandy. Data was collected using a pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire which was designed based on extensive literature review and opinions of experts in breast cancer management. SPSS version 26 was used to analyse the data. Out of 385 participants, a majority (60%) agreed (fairly or highly) that proper nutrition can improve cancer prognosis. Most participants (n = 213, 55.3%) had not sought information on nutrition from anyone. Those who gathered nutrition-related information (n = 172, 44.7%) mainly relied on family/friends (85.5%), peers (83.2%), and healthcare professionals (Oncologists - 62.4%, General practitioners - 52%, Nurses - 32.9%). Most respondents agreed with consuming citrus fruits (93.5%), carrot (95.6%), manioc (99.5%) and pomegranate (99.7%) and 97.4% disagreed with consuming alcohol following the diagnosis. Participants emphasized the importance of prescribing specific diets (85.2%) and enhancing knowledge on weight management and dietary well-being (77.7%). The patients with breast cancer have an average awareness of dietary benefits. There is a need for conducting awareness programs during their follow-ups and more involvement of healthcare professionals towards providing education and guidance.

Keywords: Breast cancer, nutritional awareness, information sources, diet