

Prevalence of risk factors of breast cancer among females of Yatinuwara Divisional Secretariat area in Kandy district

**U. Jayasekara^{1*}, M.L. Jayathilake¹, A. Jayasinghe¹,
P.B. Hewavithane² and P.V.R. Kumarasiri³**

¹*Department of Radiography, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka,* ²*Department of Radiology Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka,* ³*Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

**Jayasekara_udeni@yahoo.com*

Breast cancer is the commonest malignancy among females accounting for 23 % of all cancers in women worldwide. The etiology of breast cancer is unknown; but numerous risk factors have been identified. There are many categories of risk factors of breast cancer. One such category classifies them as environmental and hereditary factors. Another has categorized them as avoidable and non-avoidable. By making women aware of these, it is possible to expect higher rate of early detection leading to reduced morbidity and mortality.

Therefore, this research was designed to find out the prevalence of known risk factors among women in Yatinuwara Secretariat area in Kandy District. Further, local data on risk factors are sparse on this commonest cancer.

This is a community based descriptive study conducted in Yatinuwara Divisional Secretariat in Kandy District. A sample of 1200 was selected randomly from the selected 30 Grama Niladari Divisions. Women aged between 35-70 years, registered in the voters list and residing there for more than one year were selected as the study population. Women who were residing for less than one year and women with physical and mental disabilities were excluded. Standardized self-administered, pretested questionnaire was used to collect data.

52.7% of the sample had risk factors considered in this study. Among them 30.9%, 16.8%, 3.9%, 0.9% had one, two, three and four risk factors respectively. Only 0.1% had five or more risk factors. Most frequently identified risk factor was having one child or being nulliparous (19.2%). Second and third commonest factors were breast feeding for less than 24 months (11.4%) and age at menarche below 11years (7.6%). Contribution of risk factors such as use of oral contraceptives, age at first child birth and family history of breast cancer were 6.6%, 4.9%, and 5% respectively. Other factors such as age at menopause, family history of ovarian cancer, past breast cancers and duration of breast feeding contributed to either 1% or less than 1%. Body mass index (BMI) contributed to 5.7% as a risk factor.

Prevalence of risk factors was 52.7% among the study sample. Commonest risk factor identified in this study was having one child or being nulliparous.

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