

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

DOI: 10.26727/NJRCM.2019.8.3.230-235

Year: 2019 Vol: 8 Issue: 3. Jul.-Sep. Page: 230-235

A study of awareness and practices regarding breast cancer among women of self help groups in rural Puducherry.

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Date of Submission : 18-05-2019

Date of online Publication : 14-09-2019

Date of Acceptance : 26-08-2019

Date of Print Publication : 30-09-2019

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ABSTRACT

Background: Breast cancer is a major cause of morbidity and mortality among females throughout the world. In India, the cancers are the third important cause of mortality and the cases of breast cancer are steadily rising in the recent decades. **Objective:** To study the awareness and practices about breast cancer among women of SHGs in rural Puducherry. **Materials and methods:** The community based cross sectional study with both quantitative and qualitative technique, was conducted in four villages which come under the field practice area of Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC), department of Community Medicine. Two Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with 8-12 participants in each group. Information from the SHG women regarding socio-demographic characteristics, awareness regarding breast cancer and practice of Breast self examination (BSE) was collected. **Results:** Nearly half of the SHG women were in the age group of 25-40 years while only 46.4% of women found to have finished their higher secondary education. The SHG women were aware regarding lump (33.9%), pain (20.5%) followed by change in the size of the breast (14.7%). Majority of SHG members (97.6%) had not heard about mammogram as a method of screening method of Breast cancer. The awareness of BSE was about (20.08 %). Majority (90.8%) of the study population have not received demonstration on BSE. Only 14.8% of SHG women knew the importance of BSE in early diagnosis. The awareness and practice of BSE among these SHG women was quite less in the present study. Manual content analysis of FGD revealed that SHG women perceived increase in magnitude of breast cancer and lifespan depends on detection and treatment. **Conclusion:** Awareness of breast cancer, screening methods and practice of BSE were found to be less in SHG member women.

Key Words: Self help groups, women, breast cancer, BSE