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REVIEW ARTICLE

AWARENESS ON CANCER AMONG THE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

***Dr. Balasubramaniam, M.**

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

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****Corresponding Author:***
Dr. Balasubramaniam, M.

ABSTRACT

Although cancer is relatively common in both developing and developed countries, public knowledge of the disease remains low. Awareness on Cancer is necessary for early identification and better health-seeking behavior. Screening methods may be underutilized due to a lack of awareness, resulting in a delay in diagnosis. The study's main goal is to increase cancer awareness and knowledge among postgraduate students. The current research is a descriptive study that uses a survey technique. As many as 68 samples were collected from the postgraduate students Bharathiar University and other than Bharathiar University of the Coimbatore district. For data collection, the investigator created the cancer awareness scale (CAS), and standardized by the investigator. The findings showed that the postgraduate students have an average level of awareness on cancer.

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INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a major public health problem both in our country and worldwide because of its disease burden, fatality, and tendency toward increased incidence. Cancer is a disease in which cells multiply out of control. These cells can arise from many different parts throughout the body and the causes of their excessive proliferation are manifold. Because the prevalence of cancer is quickly increasing in India, it is critical to increasing cancer awareness and information among the general public.

CANCER: SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Cancer is the abnormal growth of body cells. Each one of us is born with a potential for cancer. It is not contagious like an illness or a cold. When a cell's or a group of cells' programming is disrupted, growth can become uncontrollable. Chronic irritation, cigarettes, smoke, dust, radioactive substances, age, sex, race, and inheritance are all factors that can modify the code. While many of these factors are beyond our control, we must be aware of the ones we do. Cancer prevention is unquestionably preferable to cancer treatment. The growth of normal cells follows a well-defined pattern. When cancer strikes, a collection of cells begins to multiply in an unregulated and haphazard manner, resulting in lumps or tumors. A malignant tumor grows inexorably and has the potential to spread to other regions of the body. 19 cancers can be linked to a person's lifestyle: Bladder cancer, Breast cancer, Cervical cancer, Colorectal cancer, Esophageal cancer, Eye cancer, Kidney cancer, Laryngeal cancers, Liver cancers, Lung cancers, Oral cancers, Ovarian cancers, Cancer of the pancreas, Prostrate cancer, Skin cancers, Stomach cancer, Testicular cancer, Thyroid cancers, Uterine cancer.

Since the prevalence of cancer is quickly increasing in India, it is critical to increasing cancer awareness and information among the general public. "Lung, breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer are some of the most frequent cancers in India," says Dr. Vijay Agarwal, a senior oncologist in New Delhi. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in India, and it is on the rise among women in metropolitan areas. The importance of early diagnosis in the management and treatment of this condition cannot be overstated. Many women present with stage III or IV cancer, which required surgery and prolonged therapy, due to ignorance, fear, and social stigma. Early detection means less aggressive therapy and a better likelihood of recovery in most circumstances. In India, cervical cancer is the second most frequent malignancy in women. It is only cancer that can be prevented, as it may be discovered in the pre-cancerous stage and treated. Oral and lung cancers seem to be the most common cancers in men and women in both urban and rural areas, and they can be prevented to a significant extent. As a result, raising public awareness about the dangers of chewing tobacco and smoking is vital.

According to Dr. Singh, the following factors are boosting the growth in cancer cases in India

- Environmental concerns such as growing pollutant emissions.
- Breast cancer risk is increased by childbirth after 30 years of age, infertility, and a lack of breastfeeding.
- Tobacco usage and smoking are two of the most prominent causes of cancer in India.
- A poor diet and mode of living.

Signs and Symptoms: Recognizing the signs of some cancers can help detect the disease while it is still in its early stages. Early

detection leads to more effective therapy and a better chance of survival.

Depending on which organ is afflicted, different cancers have distinctive symptoms. However, there are a few frequent signs that should drive you to see a doctor as soon as possible:

- Pain in any part of your body that is constant and without any known reason
- Sudden weight loss without any known reason
- Extreme tiredness all the time
- Fever that does not subside or keeps coming back
- Changes in skin color or texture
- Painful or painless lumps in any part of the body
- Unusual discharge or bleeding from any part of the body
- Unhealed sores or ulcers on skin or mouth

These signs do not always indicate that the person is suffering from cancer. There could be a variety of non-cancerous causes for them, but people should see a doctor as soon as possible.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Stubbings. S *et al*. (2009) conducted a study on the Development of a measurement tool to assess public awareness of cancer which aimed to develop ad validate a measurement tool to assess cancer awareness in the general population. The items assess awareness of cancer warning signs, risk factors, and incidence. Screening programmes. The demographic characteristics of the study sample are 148. The results indicated that the students who received an intervention leaflet than the control leaflet. Osei Afriyie *et al*. (2021) conducted a study on Breast cancer awareness, risk factors, and screening practices among future health professionals in Ghana. This study aimed to explore the awareness, risk factors, and self-reported screening practices of breast cancer among female undergraduate students at the University of Health and Allied Sciences. In this study, a cross-sectional study was conducted among 385 female undergraduate students using a pre-tested questionnaire. The result shows that there exists a gap between awareness and practice of breast cancer screening, which was influenced by optimism in breast cancer risk perception and religion. Awareness campaigns and education should be intensified in the University to bridge this gap.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY: As per the World Cancer Report, cancer has a high incidence rate over the world, with an estimated 20 million cases by 2030 (WHO, 2008). Every year, almost 1.1 million new cancer cases are detected in India, with 0.63 million people dying as a result. According to a World Health Organization report, 30-50 percent of all cancer incidences can be prevented. Chemical and atmospheric contaminants, poor dietary habits, a sedentary lifestyle, and infections are all examples. One of the most effective strategies to combat breast cancer is to raise awareness about the illness. As a result, everyone must be aware of the disease's signs and symptoms, as well as the risk factors and good lifestyle habits.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the level of awareness and knowledge about cancer among postgraduate students.
- To find out the significance of difference, if any among the postgraduate students in their awareness on cancer concerning their gender and the nature of the institution.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- The postgraduate students have a low-level awareness of cancer.
- There is no significant mean score difference between cancer awareness scores of postgraduate students, sub-grouped based on Gender.
- There is no significant mean score difference between cancer awareness scores of postgraduate students, sub-grouped based on the Nature of the Institution.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The present study is Descriptive Research, involving Survey Technique. The cancer awareness scale developed by the investigator, aimed at assessing postgraduate students 'awareness regard to cancer was used to collect data. The formulated tool was circulated through an online google form to various department postgraduate students. As many as 68 postgraduate students responded to this survey. The collected data were subjected to differential and descriptive statistical analyses.

TOOLS USED

The following tool was used for the study.

- Cancer Awareness Scale (CAS) was developed and validated by the investigator.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

The following statistical techniques were used in this study:

- Mean (m) and Standard Deviation (SD)
- 't'-test for determining the significance of the difference between the means of the two groups.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF DATA

Distribution of Sample in terms of the Demographic Variables

Variables	Sub-Variables	No. of Students	%
Gender	Male	11	16.2%
	Female	57	83.8%
Nature of Institution	State University	41	60.3%
	Government	27	39.7%

From the above table, it can be understood that out of the sample of 68, 16.2% of the postgraduate students (11) are male, and the remaining 83.8% are female (57). It can also be understood that out of the total sample of 68postgraduate students, 60.3% of students are from State University, and 39.7% of students are from the Government institution.

ANALYSIS OF CANCER AWARENESS SCORES

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Whole Sample's Cancer Awareness Scores

No. of Postgraduate Students	Maximum Obtainable Score	Mean	Standard Deviation
68	50	30.19	4.614

As revealed by the above table, the mean cancer awareness score of the whole sample is 30.19 and the standard deviation is 4.614 against the maximum obtainable score of 50.

Awareness on Cancer Levels of the Postgraduate Students

Levels	Score Range	No. of Postgraduate Students	Percentage
Very High	41 – 50	2	2.9%
High	31 – 40	24	35.3%
Moderate	21 – 30	40	58.8%
Low	11 – 20	2	2.9%
Very Low	0 – 10	0	0%

The data given in the above table reveals that postgraduate students have a moderate level of awareness of cancer. The above table shows that 38.2% of the postgraduate students have a high level, 58.8% of

them have a moderate level and 2.9% of them have a low level of awareness of cancer. The data given in the above table reveals that postgraduate students have a moderate level of awareness of cancer.

Levels	Score Range	No. of Postgraduate Students	Percentage
High	35 – 50	12	17.6%
Moderate	13 – 34	56	82.4%
Low	0 – 12	0	0%

The above table shows that 17.6 % of the postgraduate students have a high level and 82.4% of them have a moderate level.

Hypothesis-1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores on cancer awareness of postgraduate students with respect to Gender.

Table 2. Significance difference between the mean scores on cancer awareness of Male and Female postgraduate students

Gender	N	Mean	S. D	't' value
Male	11	29.55	3.698	
Female	57	30.32	4.789	*0.601

*Not significant at 0.05 level

The above table presents an analysis of the mean cancer awareness scores of male and female postgraduate students, who formed the sample. The mean cancer awareness scores of male students are 29.55 and that of the female students is 30.32 and the respective standard deviations are 3.698 and 4.789. The calculated 't' value, 0.601 is less than the table value of 1.97 at 0.05 level of significance. It implies that the male and female postgraduate students do not differ significantly in their awareness of cancer. Hence the framed null hypothesis is accepted. Further, it can be seen that the mean cancer awareness score of the male students is less than that of the female students. Therefore, it may be concluded that female students are more aware than their male counterparts of cancer.

Hypothesis-2

There is no significant difference between the mean scores on cancer awareness of postgraduate students with respect to Nature of the Institution.

Table 3. Significance difference between the mean scores on cancer awareness of Bharathiar University and Government college postgraduate students

Nature of the Institution	N	Mean	S. D	't' value
Bharathiar University	41	30.37	4.334	
Other than Bharathiar University	27	29.93	5.083	*0.370

*Not significant at 0.05 level

The above table presents an analysis of the mean cancer awareness scores of state Bharathiar University and other than Bharathiar University postgraduate students, who formed the sample. The mean cancer awareness scores of BU students are 30.37 and that of the other than BU students is 29.93 and the respective standard deviations are 4.334 and 5.083. The calculated't' value, 0.370 is less than the table value of 1.97 at 0.05 level of significance. It implies that the Bharathiar University and other than Bharathiar University postgraduate students do not differ significantly in their awareness of cancer. Hence the framed null hypothesis is accepted. Further, it can be seen that the mean cancer awareness score of the students who are from other than Bharathiar University is less than that of the students who are from the Bharathiar University. Therefore, it may be concluded that Bharathiar university students are more aware than their other than Bharathiar University students on cancer awareness.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following are the main conclusions drawn from the study:

- The Postgraduate Students are neither high nor low in their awareness on cancer; they have a moderate level of awareness of cancer.

From the percentile analysis of the data, 38.2% of the postgraduate students have a high level, 58.8% of them have a moderate level and 2.9% of them have a low level of awareness on cancer.

- The male and female postgraduate students do not differ in their awareness on cancer.
- The Bharathiar University and other than Bharathiar University postgraduate students do not differ in their awareness on cancer.

CONCLUSION

In India, the prevalence of cancer is quickly rising. The studies show that the screening practices were poor in India. Therefore, it's critical to increase people's awareness of cancer and cancer literacy. Also, it can be improved by creating community-level awareness. According to the Tamil Nadu Cancer Registry Project (TNCRP) report 2017, cancer surveillance of Tamil Nadu population of about 80 million as of date. The projected new cancers by the year 2021 are 81814. People will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives. However, nationwide cancer survival rates are rising. The finding of the study reveals that postgraduate students have some awareness of cancer. For better survival, the knowledge and awareness of cancer are not alone important also its screening and treatment are important. Awareness of risk factors of cancer and its preventive aspects is essential for early detection through screening and treatment. Cancer prevention is more successful, efficient, and cost-effective than cancer treatment. For that, cancer awareness programmes must be conducted in every institution and encouraged to go for the screening and treatment process for those who are affected by it.

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