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Awareness and attitude towards available cancer prevention programs and services among nurses in Sri Lanka

Basnayaka M¹, Jayasundara GKJMI¹, Thennakoon TRRL¹, Witharanage NTK¹, Perera ACH*,
Amarasekara AATD²

¹*Kaatsu International University, Sri Lanka,* ²*Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka.*

Background: Cancer is an abnormal cell grown which cannot be controlled and it is responsible for the 9.6 millions of deaths worldwide annually. Nurses are valuable resources for early detection and for making referrals of patients with cancer.

Objective: The study was conducted with the objective of assessing nurses' awareness and attitudes towards the available cancer prevention programs and services in Sri Lanka.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among purposively selected 350 nursing undergraduates who are currently engaged in the profession, from KIU, Sri Lanka. Pre-tested and corrected self-administered questionnaire was used for the data collection and ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics review committee, KIU. Descriptive statistics were used to the data analysis.

Results: Among the 350 nurses, the majority were between 25-35 years (47%), female (94.8%) and an extensive number was working in National (38%) and Teaching (39%) hospitals. Ninety five percent agreed that screening test is important for the prevention and early detection of cancers, and 86% were confident with their knowledge regarding cancer screening tests. Nearly 75% were aware about the Family Health Bureau and the national cancer prevention programme as available screening programmes in Sri Lanka, and 42% had experiences on making referrals for these programmes. General attitude about the cancer prevention programmes and services were high as more than 80% mentioned about the benefits of them, but 38% believed that the facilities provided for cancer early detection are inadequate. Seventy percent agreed that nurses are the best category in making people aware about the cancer prevention.

Conclusion: As the best health category for making people aware of cancer prevention, nurses' knowledge and attitude was sufficient. However, there is a need of improving facilities in cancer early detection.