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Awareness of breast cancer screening measures among female school teachers in Giriulla educational zone

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Background: Breast cancer is considered one of the most common malignancies and the second leading cause of cancer related deaths in women in Sri Lanka as well as worldwide. Early detection is vital to reduce breast cancer mortality by allowing intervention at an early stage of cancer progression.

Objective: To assess the awareness of breast cancer screening measures among female school teachers at Giriulla educational zone.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among female teachers (n=225) of six schools in Giriulla educational zone. Participants' socio-demographic information and awareness of breast cancer screening measures was collected using a content validated, pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the National hospital of Sri Lanka. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics on SPSS version 21.0.

Results: The response rate was 100%. Most of the teachers belonged to the age group of 41-50 years (63.1%), and married (n=183). Of the total, 69% of teachers had diplomas or degrees. The majority of the teachers had one to two children (62.2%). Findings indicated that though a higher proportion of (93.8%, n=211) teachers heard about breast self-examination (BSE) as an early diagnosis method, more than 50 % of teachers were not aware of the appropriate age to start, frequency, and best-time period in the menstrual cycle to be do BSE. The majority of the teachers were not aware of the technique (58.7%) and frequency of clinical breast examination (71.6%). Similarly, a higher proportion (>77%) of teachers had a lack of awareness of mammography. Only a minority of the sample had knowledge on the appropriate age to undergo mammography and the frequency of performing the mammography.

Conclusion: Teachers' awareness of breast cancer screening measures was found to be insufficient. Healthcare professionals should target this important group by introducing effective programs on breast cancer screening measures.