

# A TRAINING ON SELF BREAST EXAMINATION AMONG WOMEN ATTENDING RURAL HEALTH AND TRAINING CENTRE OF A MEDICAL COLLEGE

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## Abstract

**INTRODUCTION :** Breast cancer is of global health concern and a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among women. Studies have shown that in most of the developing nations, breast cancer is diagnosed in advanced stages of the disease and thus has a poor outcome and high fatality rate. Therefore, Breast self-examination (BSE) has been identified as the only realistic approach in early detection of breast cancer in developing nations.

**OBJECTIVES :** To encourage the participants to perform Self Breast Examination at their residence.

To follow up the participants after 15 days for assessment of their training and for queries.

**METHODS :** The study was conducted among 100 women of 35 years and above attending a rural health and training centre. They were given a basic training on self breast examination. Following which, they were followed up on the confidence of Self Breast Examination.

**RESULTS :** 84 % women tried self breast examination at their residence after this training. 87 % of the women were competent enough to perform self breast examination on their own. 42 % of women were confident to train self breast examination to their mother/mother in law and daughters.

**CONCLUSION :** A high proportion of women tried self breast examination at their residence, were competent enough to perform self breast examination on their own and were confident to train self breast examination to others. Hence, this training program on a long run will help in early detection of breast lump.

## INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is the country's leading cause of cancer among women. With increasing cases of breast cancer every year, there is a prompt need for the prevention and early detection. Many women are still not aware about the techniques available in the early detection of breast cancer. Even though aware of it, they are not willing to spend for the recommended screening mammogram. Some are even hesitant to go to the hospital for screening. Hence, in order to overcome this, the concept of self-breast examination will be very helpful in early detection of breast neoplasms. This training will be easy to understand even for illiterate women.<sup>1</sup> This youtube video on training of Self Breast Examination was developed under the guidance of Professor of Pathology, Incharge of Virtual Training in Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi under NICPR- ECHO project (National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research-Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) which is a knowledge sharing tool that shares knowledge through experts. Most of the breast cancers that are detected in the very early stage by a self-breast examination are not detectable by mammography.<sup>3</sup>

Studies have shown that in most of the developing nations, breast cancer is diagnosed in advanced stages of the disease and thus has a poor outcome and prognosis.<sup>4</sup>

Self-breast examination is proposed as an inexpensive, non-invasive, and easily accessible means of promptly identifying early-stage breast neoplasms.<sup>5</sup> The method involves the woman herself looking at and feeling each breast for possible lumps, distortions or swelling.

However, the earlier that breast cancer is detected, the more treatment options are available and the greater the chance of recovery. The percentage of young women who suffer from risk factors of breast cancer are very high.<sup>6</sup> Hence, this self-breast examination should begin at an early age especially for the high risk groups. Though women are aware of the self breast examination, they are not aware neither of the benefits nor the step-wise procedure involved in the self breast examination and its role in prompt detection of early stage breast neoplasms. Hence this study was aimed to encourage participants to perform self breast examination at their residence.

Follow up of the participants after 15 days was done to



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know whether this training stood as a motivation for them to perform self breast examination on a regular basis.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**TYPE OF THE STUDY :** Cross sectional study

**SITE OF THE STUDY :** The study was conducted among the women 35 years and above attending the out-patient department at Rural health training center of Sri Ramachandra Medical College & Research Institute.

**PERIOD OF THE STUDY :** Duration of the study was 6 months.

**SAMPLE SIZE :** Based on review of literature, about 80 % of the participants of the study were competent in self breast examination after training.

Based on this, sample size was calculated.

$$\frac{4 \times 80 \times 20}{8 \times 8} = 100$$

**INCLUSION CRITERIA :** Women in the age group of 35 years and above

**EXCLUSION CRITERIA :** Women with amastia.

Breastfeeding women. Women with symptoms of cyclical mastalgia.

**ETHICAL ISSUES, IF ANY :** Study was initiated after obtaining permission from the Institutional Ethics Committee of Sri Ramachandra University of Higher Education and Research. The study involves administering a short questionnaire and a brief training. Data was collected after obtaining written informed consent from the participants. The information collected from the participants was and will be kept confidential.

## METHOD OF TRAINING FOR SELF BREAST EXAMINATION

Expert opinion regarding various training procedures for Self-Breast Examination were sought for the best training module like video demonstration and explanation.

- Duration of the video content- 4 mins 56 secs (4:56)
- The content was developed by Incharge of Virtual Training in Medicine department, AIIMS, New Delhi.
- The video was based on tamil language.
- The content of the video was validated by experts in the field of General Surgery. Prior to the start of the study, about 10 women , who were not included in the study were selected randomly from the outpatient department of rural health and training centre. They have been shown the video of self breast examination. They were able to understand the video easily.
- It was an animated video.
- Informed consent was obtained from the study participants.

The video explains about

- the symptoms of breast cancer.
- the demonstration of 5 steps of self-breast examination involving various positions and methods.
- the importance of palpation of axilla.
- the benefits involved in self breast examination.
- the age to begin self-breast examination.
- the frequency and timing to perform self-breast examination.
- how to feel an abnormality in the breast.
- whom to report or consult in case of any abnormality felt on this examination.

Important things to be noted in self-breast examination, highlighted in the video includes :

1. Any changes in the breasts, including their look,feel or size.
2. Changes in the nipples look or feel.
3. Dimpling or puckering on the breast skin.
4. Hard or thick lumps underneath the breast skin or deep within the tissue.
5. Pain in the breast or on any particular area of breast.
6. Discharge from the nipple.
7. Retraction of nipple.
8. Rashes in or around the breast.
9. Warmth,redness or dark spots on one or both breasts.

The participants were comfortable in understanding the video. Their queries regarding the self-breast examination were addressed.

The importance of this examination in early detection of breast neoplasms was clearly explained and the study participants were requested to take forward the training given to their mother/mother-in-law and other women at home. Importance of the self-understanding of the benefits in this examination were also explained.

Questions on follow up and the knowledge gained post training on self-breast examination using a semi-structured questionnaire:

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 1. Did you go home and try self-breast examination?               | a. yes |
|   | b. no  |
| 2. Are you able to perform self-breast examination as trained?    | a. yes |
|   | b. no  |
| 3. Did you try explaining it for other women at your house?       | a. yes |
|   | b. no  |
| 4. Have you understood the importance of self-breast examination? | a. yes |
|   | b. no  |
| 5. Will you do self-breast examination on a Regular basis?        | a. yes |
|   | b. no  |

Social desirability bias is possible and we tried our best to minimise it by keeping all the follow up questions non-

threatening and non-embarrassing. In order to avoid the participants discomfort of conscious answering to the questions in front of the audience, a separate one-to-one follow up was done for all the study participants.

## RESULTS

The participants were comfortable in understanding the video.

The study participants were followed up after 15 days. They were enquired about the impact of the training program. Their knowledge and confidence gained post training session was assessed. They were asked about their sharing of this knowledge and the training program to other women at house.

- 84 % women tried self-breast examination at their residence after this training
- 81 % of the women were competent enough to perform self breast examination on their own.
- 42 % of women took forward and explained the training program to other women at house.
- 58 % of women though aware of the training, didn't explain to other women at house.

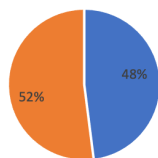


Figure 1: Percentage of women who took forward and explained training

There is reasonably good uptake of the training program by the study participants to other women at their house (mother, mother-in-law). The reason women must do self-breast examination is to learn what's normal for their breasts. Importance of this examination must be known by all the women in the house, as genetic factors play a role in the development of the breast neoplasms.

## DISCUSSION

Many women report that the first sign of their breast cancer was a new breast lump, which they discovered on their own by doing self-breast examination.

This is the reason, that this training of self-breast examination is recommended for them to be familiar with the normal consistency of their breasts. This familiarity will help them realize any abnormality if found to be reported promptly. A high proportion of women tried self breast examination at their residence, were competent enough to perform self breast examination on their own and were

confident to train self breast examination to others after this video based training.<sup>2</sup>

Especially for women in low resource settings, due to the lack of access to diagnostic facilities, it is essential to educate them with self-breast examination as an important and primary modality for screening.<sup>3</sup>

This examination being simple, quick and cost free, it can be performed by every woman on a routine monthly basis easily. Enough motivation and encouragement are to be given to them to perform this examination for their own benefit. This can be done privately without any aid or the assistance of medical personnel.

Hence, this program on a long run will help in early detection of breast lump. Therefore, many such training programs can be implemented effectively to motivate and encourage women especially in certain rural areas where access to mammography and other techniques are limited. Thus, prevention is better than cure.

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