

A STUDY OF BREAST CANCER IN AN IRAQI GENERAL HOSPITAL⁺

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Abstract:

Background : This study attempts to shed the light on some important factors influencing the risk of breast cancer such as family history, education level, dietary habits, hormonal contraceptives, etc ...

Patients and Methods: Survey for breast cancer was carried out on thirty seven female patients with breast cancer diagnosed between 2001 and 2003 in the AL - Kadymia Teaching Hospital . Parameters concerning epidemiological and clinical features are used in this study to determine the significance of the results.

Results: The mostly affected age group was 48-55 years old . About 83% of our patients having a positive family history of breast cancer . The risk of breast cancer is increased in women with a first degree relative with breast cancer . *Results also show that most of the women 89% were housewives .*

Conclusion: High relative frequency in Iraq , reflects the need for active screening and education programs . Although breast self – examination is reported to be less effective than mammography or examination by a trained physician , it is a valuable approach, simple, inexpensive, non- invasive and non-hazardous , it also encourages women to take responsibility for their own health .

المستخلص :

الخلفية : هذه الدراسة تُحاولُ تسليط الضوء على بعض العوامل المهمة التي تؤثرُ على خطر سرطان الثدي مثل التاريخ العائلي، مستوى التعليم، العادات الغذائية، موانع الحمل الهرمونية، الخ. . .

المرضى وطرق العمل: مسح لسرطان الثدي نُفذ في سبعة وثلاثين مريضة 'شخصن بين عام ٢٠٠١ و ٢٠٠٣ في مستشفى الكاظمية التعليمي . اعتمدت المعايير الوبائية والسريية في هذه الدراسة لبيان أهمية النتائج .

النتائج : المجموعة العمرية المتأثرة في الغالب كانت بعمر ٤٨-٥٥ سنة. حوالي ٨٣ % من المريضات في الدراسة الحالية يمتلكن تاريخاً عائلياً إيجابياً لسرطان الثدي . إن خطر سرطان الثدي متزايد في النساء بوجود المرض في الأقارب من الدرجة الأولى في محيط العائلة . وقد أوضحت نتائج الدراسة إن ٨٩ % من المريضات كن ربات بيوت .

الخاتمة: المعدل العالي من الإصابات في العراق ، يعكس الحاجة للفحص المتطور ولبرامج التعليم والتثقيف الصحي. بالرغم من إن الفحص الذاتي للصدر يُعتقد بأنه أقل فعالية من فحص الثدي الشعاعي أو الفحص

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Total	37	1	4	3	2		1	3	7	5	5	4	2
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Results :

Breast cancer was found to be higher in the age group 48-55 years old, Table 2, most of them were married .Most of them (89.1%) were housewives . It is evident that most of the women 83.7 % had family history of breast cancer . patients suffering from breast cancer at a period ranged between 3-12 months. presenting symptoms included breast mass, skin changes, nipple manifestations (bleeding, ulceration) .The tumor affected the left side in (51.3%) cases . The mass was localized to the upper lateral quadrant and lower lateral quadrant (70.28 & 29.72) respectively . Table 3 ,show the rate of metastasis to different organs . Tumors have many predilection sites but mostly in the lymph nodes, liver, kidney and brain .

Table (2) :Age ratio of recorded cases .

Age/years	Pt. no	%
32-39	3	8.1
40-47	5	13.5
48-55	14	37.8
56-63	9	24.4
64-71	6	16.2
Total	37	100

Table(3): Rate of metastasis to different organs.

Pt. no	liver	%	liver & bones*	%	stomach	%	uterus	%
37	18	48.64	14	37.83	4	10.8	1	2.7

bones*(hands=10,vertebra=4)

Discussion :

Breast cancer is getting the highest level of attention from Iraqi medical authorities [11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18].

Breast cancer is considered to be the commonest type of cancer in Iraq ,it constitutes 18.4%, 2.6% & 14.3% , of all types of cancers in 1987, 1997 &1995-1997 [14,15,16] respectively .Among females , breast cancer accounts for more than 30% of the registered female cancer , with a sharp increase in the incidence of this tumor in younger age group[16] .

Approximately 50% of breast cancer occurs in women aged between 50&60 years and a further 30% occurs over the age of 70 years [19].This high relative frequency could be attributed to the late administration of the health education programs adopted by the Ministry of Health or the fear of some women of discovering a breast cancer, or feeling immune from breast cancer because they think that breast cancer affects only older women[11]. The risk of breast cancer is increased in women who begin to menstruate at an early age [19].

Many reports indicate that smoking, alcohol consumption , a high animal protein diet seem to be associated with a higher risk of breast cancer , while a high vitamin C and B- carotene intake seems to be associated with a reduced risk [7&20].The relative

risk was in women who had used oral contraceptives within 10 years [21 & 22] . Human cancers may follow exposure to particular environmental factors , but it is well established that , cancer is genetic in origin. Women with poor family history have a 50 \50 chance of inheriting the gene [8]. Early data suggested that the breast cancer risk of women who carried the gene may be as high as 85% , but more recent data from Europe seem to indicate that risk is of the order of 50%[1].Genetically, it occurs more common in women with a family of breast cancer [21]. The risk of breast cancer is increased in a women with a first –degree relative with breast cancer , the risk is also increased but to a lesser extent in women with an affect second-degree relative [2] .

Endogenous and exogenous factors seem to be associated with a higher risk of the disease .A previous study showed significant difference in enzyme activities between benign and malignant neoplasm when compared with each other and when compared with healthy control [18] .The idea is that these wide difference in incidence depends to a large extent on environmental factor rather than a purely different genetic susceptibility [23] .

The results show that the most affected age group in female 48-55 years old .The risk of breast cancer is increased in women who undergo the menopause at a relatively advanced age [19] . This is in agreement with results reported in 1997 [16] and with [15 &17] . In Jordan [24]showed that the mean age group was 49 years old . The present finding is much less than the mean age in the west which is around 60 years [25] .[26 & 27] showed that women between 45 &55 years old were the most frequent victims, but many factors influence :it is frequency .It may include younger population [28]. Risk of breast cancer is increased in women who begin to menstruate at an early age [19] . Breast cancer in young women tends to be associated with a poorer prognosis and a more advanced stage at presentation [29] .

Early diagnosis of breast cancer leads to better prognosis [27] . Since the incidence of breast cancer is known to increase with age , tumor site does not differ with age [7] . Other series investigators have reported that tumors occurred more frequently on the left side than on the right [23] . [24] found that tumor affected the right side more than left side .[5] showed that disease affecting in varying degrees and in different ways all of the tissue of both breast. Epidemiological facts have become evident that breast cancer occurs more often on the left than on the right and is more common in women who have not born children or who have not lactating [21] .This left-sided excess is mainly a phenomenon that has been reported in post menopausal cancers [30].

Liver was the main site of metastasis 48.64% . Patients with poorly differentiated tumor histology have a high risk of distant metastasis after invasive local recurrence, this correlates with other studies [31&32] .

Most of the women 89.1% were housewives . Approximately 83.7% of all cases in present study gave a positive family history of breast cancer. The risk of breast cancer is increased 2-3 fold in a woman with a first degree relative with breast cancer; the risk is also increased, but to a lesser extent, in women with an affected second-degree relative [7].This reflects the genetic mutation and inherited factors were thought to be the main causes of the disease [27] .Early age at diagnosis ,bilateralism, multiple affected family members would be more likely to suggest the presence of a dominant gene [1]. About 5 to 10% of all breast cancers are inherited by an autosomal dominant mutation, and inherited factors are thought to contribute to (25-35%) of cases diagnosed before the age of 30 years .Consanguineous marriage is a common practice in the Arab countries, which supports the suggestion, the role of

inheritance. In a report coming from Palestine only 20% and 5% of women from Jordan had family history of breast cancer . We believe that this figure is more realistic .The preponderance of evidence indicates that younger age at first birth is associated with a reduced risk of breast cancer [24, 33] .

Finally, breast self examination BSE is simple inexpensive and non hazardous, it is also encourages women to take responsibility for their own health . [34] estimated BSE could reduce breast cancer mortality by approximately 25% which could be beneficial in societies (such as in Iraq) in which routine mammography screening is not practiced . Higher educational levels were found to be associated with higher levels of BSE knowledge ,while other factors were not, such as age , marital status, residency, occupation and history of breast problems .

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