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## **Awareness of Breast Cancer and Breast Self-examination among Female Undergraduates in the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka: A Cross-sectional Study**

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**Background:** Breast Cancer (BC) is the commonest cancer among females all over the world and in Sri Lanka. The regular Breast Self-Examination (BSE) is an important way to detect BC early. Then it is more likely to be treated successfully and increased survival.

**Objectives:** To assess the awareness of BC and BSE among female undergraduates in the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted by enrolling first year female undergraduates in eight faculties of University of Ruhuna. A convenient sampling method was used. A Google form-based questionnaire, developed from the previous studies was used to gather data on awareness of BC and BSE. Descriptive statistics were done using SPSS version 25.0.

**Results:** Out of the total of 260 undergraduates, 96.5% were Sinhalese and 98.8% were single. Most of the participants (99.2%) heard about BC. Electronic media was the most important source of information provider regarding BC. Awareness about the risk factors such as the past history of breast lump, family history of BC and older age were 65.8%, 61.9% and 29.2%. Of the total sample, approximately 86% of respondents identified, breast lump as an early sign of BC. Though 72.6% heard about BSE, only 27.7% have ever performed it. However, only 15.8% of the respondents correctly stated the appropriate age to practice the BSE as 'from 20 years'. The majority of the respondents (70.4%) have no idea about the time of performing BSE. Only 12.7% of the subjects correctly identified the main steps of BSE.

**Conclusions:** Though awareness of BC was high, performance of BSE was very low among the study population. Therefore, health education and awareness programmes for undergraduates are essential to enhance the knowledge on BC and BSE.

**Keywords:** *Awareness, Breast cancer, Breast self-examination, Female undergraduates, Sri Lanka*