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Barriers for Performing Breast Self-Examination among the Advanced Level Students in Selected Girls' School, Gampaha District

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Background: Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting the women worldwide. In 2018, 1183 deaths were occurred attributed to breast cancers in Sri Lanka. Early detection and prompt treatment will reduce the risk of death and regular Breast Self Examination (BSE) will ensure the early detection of breast cancer. School girls are the next female generation of the society in which the awareness of the breast cancer and the practices on BSE need to be improved for a healthy society.

Objectives: To evaluate the barriers for performing BSE among the female advanced level students in a selected girls' school in Gampaha district

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 400 advanced level students in a selected girls' school in Gampaha district. Students were enrolled using systematic random sampling method. A pretested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Results: The advanced level students from Science (33%), Art (29%) and Commerce (38%) streams were participated in the study. Majority of the participants were Sinhalese (97.8%) and Buddhists (95%). Of the participants, 15.2% had family history of cancer and among them, 4.3% had family history of breast cancer. Only 1.3% of the students had performed the BSE at least once during their life and only 1% had positive attitudes regarding the BSE. The most commonly reported barriers for BSE were lack of self-concern (67%), feeling uncomfortable (55%), fear (54%), shame (47%) and lack of knowledge (61%).

Conclusions: Majority of the students have not performed BSE. Lack of self-concern, feeling uncomfortable, fear, shame and lack of knowledge were the barriers to perform BSE. Awareness and attitude regarding the breast cancer and BSE should be improved and school based awareness programmes can be implemented to fill the gaps in knowledge and attitudes.

Keywords: *Breast Cancer, Breast self-examination, Girls*