

Anthropometric parameters and attitudes towards physical exercise among breast cancer patients

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One fourth of breast cancers worldwide are attributed to overweight, obesity and sedentary lifestyle. Waist circumference (WC), hip circumference (HC) and waist to hip ratio (W: H) and Body mass index (BMI) are anthropometric parameters that reflect body fat distribution. This study attempted to investigate the association between various anthropometric characteristics, amount and types of exercise involved during the last two years and attitudes towards exercises among breast cancer patients. Randomly selected, newly diagnosed breast cancer patients (n=80) in the age group of 35-75 years from Cancer Institute Maharagama and few hospitals in the private sector participated in the study. Attitudes towards need of physical exercise, time duration and type of exercises that the patients were involved in were recorded using an interviewer administered questionnaire. BMI \geq 23 and $>$ 25 were considered as overweight (OW) and obese respectively. Over 80cm of WC and W: H ratio of \geq 0.80 was considered as risk category, and statistical associations were analyzed. Among the patients, 63.75% had BMI greater than 23 and 25% among them were obese. Among 64% of post-menopausal women 39.6% and among pre-menopausal women 48.1% had BMI above 25 kg/m². A significant difference between the BMI, WC and W: H ratio was not observed ($p>$ 0.05) between pre and post-menopausal women. According to the WC, 66.7% of post-menopausal women and 70.3% of pre-menopausal women were in the risk category. With respect to W: H ratio, 89.6% and 81.5% of post and pre-menopausal women belonged to the risk category respectively. From all the patients only 18.7% were exercising regularly (brisk walking or jogging) for at least 30 minutes, 3 times per week but among them 67% were still either overweight or obese. Majority of the participants were of the opinion that household chores provide adequate physical activity despite leading a sedentary life style. None of the patients were involved in physical exercises such as swimming, cycling and aerobics. Among the anthropometric parameters, W: H ratio was superior to WC ($p<$ 0.05) and WC was superior to BMI ($p<$ 0.05) in identifying the increased fat distribution in newly diagnosed breast cancer patients of whom majority were either overweight or obese. Although the majority of participants were either overweight or obese, they were not taking part in appropriate physical exercise programs. The patients lacked knowledge on frequency, duration and the importance of physical exercise in maintaining the correct weight.

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