

AWARENESS ON CANCER AND BARRIERS TO HEALTH CARE SEEKING AMONG ADULTS OF BARDIYA

Chanda Sah,¹ Srijana Aryal,² Gita Neupane¹

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a leading public health problem worldwide. Low awareness on cancer leads to increase in burden of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to find out awareness regarding cancer among people. Total 100 samples were selected by using non-probability purposive sampling method. Semi-structured interview schedule was developed with the guide of the Cancer Awareness Measure (CAM) to collect data. Collected data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS

The result show that none of the study respondents were aware of all the nine warning signs of cancer. Majority (80%) of the respondents were aware that “a sore that doesn't heal” and minority (15%) knew about “change in bowel and bladder habit” as warning signs of cancer. Regarding risk factors, majority knew chemical fertilizer and pesticides and unseasonal fruits and vegetables (90%), smoking (88%) as risk factors of cancer and minority (32%) knew about excessive sun exposure. There was statistically significant association between respondents' level of awareness regarding cancer with education status ($p=0.011$).

CONCLUSION

Findings of the study revealed that more than half (68%) of the adults had low awareness regarding cancer. Emotional barriers (88%) were known to be affecting health care seeking behaviours for cancer. Therefore, it is recommended to organize health awareness campaigns addressing emotional barriers might improve in early diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

KEYWORDS Awareness, Barriers, Cancer, Risk factors, Warning signs

1. Universal College of Nursing Sciences, Bhairahawa, Nepal
2. Health and Hygiene officer, Backward Society Education, Bardiya, Nepal

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For Correspondence

Ms. Chanda Sah
Universal College of Nursing Sciences
UCMS
Bhairahawa, Nepal
Email: chanda.sah08@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Globally, cancer is the second leading cause of deaths. Cancer is a generic term for a large group of diseases characterized by the growth of abnormal cells beyond their usual boundaries that can then invade adjoining parts of the body and/or spread to other organs. According to current evidence, between 30% and 50% of cancer deaths could be prevented by modifying or avoiding key risk factors, including avoiding tobacco products, reducing alcohol consumption, maintaining a healthy body weight, exercising regularly and addressing infection-related risk factors.¹

The GLOBOCAN 2018 estimated 18.1 million new cases of cancer and 9.6 million deaths from cancer in 2018. Around 70% of cancer deaths occur in low and middle-income countries. One in five men and one in six women worldwide develop cancer during their lifetime, and one in eight men and one in 11 women die from the disease.² A report published by WHO has shown that cancer mortality in Nepal is higher in females as compared to males; 7,400 and 6,900 respectively.¹ By 2020 the incidence rate of cancer per 100,000 is estimated to be 41.4 in female and 38.5 in male.³

Cancers are preventable if people are aware of their early warning signs and associated risk factors. Study of the Kerala, India showed that low level of awareness of cancer warning signs among the rural population. About 55% and 60% respondents could correctly name the common cancer to be breast cancer in females and lung cancer in males.⁴ A study of Mumbai, India showed that 32.2% respondents aware about cancer as dangerous disease, 20.6% respondents were not able to describe cancer. Regarding symptoms 51.8% respondents didn't know any symptoms and commonest risk factor known was tobacco consumption by majority respondents (85.7%).⁵ A study of Lalitpur, Nepal showed that 95% of participants showed a strong need for cancer education.⁶

Cancer is an important lifestyle-related disease, and Nepal needs to place greater focus on raising awareness on cancer warning signs, risk factors and barriers in seeking health care facilities. Very few studies have been conducted to assess the general awareness of cancer in Nepal. The objective of the current study was, therefore, to find this in a selected area of Bardiya.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to find out the awareness regarding cancer warning signs, risk factors and barriers in seeking health care facilities among community people. The study was conducted in Madhuvan municipality, ward no.7, Bardiya District, Province-5, Nepal. Total 100 adults were selected as samples by using purposive sampling.

Semi-structured interview schedule was developed with the guide of the Cancer Awareness Measure (CAM) to collect data. Data collection was done within 4 weeks from (2nd to 28th September, 2018). Administrative and ethical approval was obtained from concerned authorities prior to data collection. The researcher contacted each respondent and obtained written informed consent for the study and interviewed. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyse the collected data with SPSS version 20.

RESULTS

The findings of the study showed that out of 100 respondents, more than half (68%) of the respondents had low level of awareness on cancer. Most (57%) of the respondents were of age group 20-40 years and among them majority (64%) were female. Most (84%) of the respondents were literate and 19% of the respondents had family history of cancer. Table 1 shows awareness regarding risk factors, which showed mostly recognized risk factors were chemical fertilizer and pesticides and unseasonal fruits and vegetables (90%), smoking (88%), exposure to another person's smoking and drinking alcohol (87%) and plastic use (78%). More than half of the respondents (65%) knew pollution, diet rich in animal fat and obesity and 55% knew aging and family history are the risk factors of cancer. The least recognized risk factor was excessive sun exposure (32%).

Table 1. Respondent's awareness regarding risk factors of cancer

Risk factors	Correct response	
	Percentage	Frequency
Alcohol	87	87
Smoking	88	88
Exposure to other person's smoking	87	87
Excessive sun exposure	32	32
Family history	55	55
Aging	55	55
Pollution	65	65
Chemical fertilizers	90	90
Chemical pesticides	90	90
Unseasonable fruits and vegetables	90	90
Unhealthy diet	65	65
Plastic use	78	78
Obesity	65	65

Table 2. shows that majority knew that a sore that does not heal (80%) and abnormal lump or swelling in the body (70%) are the warning signs of cancer. More than half (62%) of the respondents knew persistent unexplained pain and unexplained weight loss are the warning signs of cancer. Minority were aware of difficulty in swallowing (48%), change in colour of mole and warts and nagging cough and

hoarseness (31%), unusual bleeding (23%) and change in bowel and bladder habit (15%) as warning signs of cancer. Overall, none of the respondents were aware of all the nine warning signs of cancer.

Table 2. Respondent's awareness on warning signs of cancer

Warning signs**	n=100	
	Frequency	Percentage
Change in bowel and bladder habit*	15	15
Change in colour of mole and warts*	31	31
Unusual bleeding*	23	23
Abnormal lump or swelling in the body*	70	70
A sore that doesn't heal*	80	80
Difficulty in swallowing*	48	48
Nagging cough and hoarseness*	31	31
White patches in body	-	-
Movable mass in body	-	-
Unexplained persistent pain	62	62
Unexplained weight loss	62	62

*Correct response

** Multiple responses

Majority of respondents knew that emotional barriers (88%) are affecting health care seeking behaviours for cancer. Findings of the study showed that there was statistically significant association between respondents' level of awareness regarding cancer with education status ($p=0.011$).

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to find out awareness regarding early warning signs of cancer, its risk factors and anticipated barriers in seeking health care help among people.

The findings of the study showed that out of 100 respondents, most (57%) of the respondents were of age group 20-40 years which is consistent with the study⁶ conducted in Lalitpur, Nepal which shows that most participants (45.3%) were aged 20-40 years. Most (84%) of the respondents were literate which is consistent with the study⁷ conducted in Chennai, India which shows that most participants (94%) were literate.

The present study showed that overall 68% of the respondents had low level of awareness on cancer which is not consistent with the study⁸ conducted in Tehran, Iran which shows that overall 30.9% of the respondents had low level of awareness on cancer.

This study shows that out of 100 respondents, 87% and 55% of the respondents had awareness regarding alcohol consumption and family history of cancer as risk factors of cancer respectively which is consistent with the study⁶ conducted in Lalitpur, Nepal which shows that 82.30% and 52.6% of the respondents had awareness regarding alcohol

consumption and family history as risk factors of cancer respectively.

The findings of the present study showed that 87% and 65% respondents had awareness regarding exposure to another person's smoking and unhealthy diet and pollution as risk factors of cancer respectively which is not consistent with the study⁹ conducted in Puducherry, India which shows that 60%, 5.7% and 2.7% of the respondents had awareness regarding exposure to another person's smoking, unhealthy diet and pollution as risk factors of cancer respectively.

It has been found that 88% of the respondents had awareness regarding smoking as a risk factor of cancer which is not consistent with the study⁶ conducted in Lalitpur, Nepal which shows that 92% of the respondents had awareness regarding smoking as a risk factor of cancer.

In this study, 65% and 55% of the respondents had awareness regarding obesity and aging as risk factors of cancer respectively which is not consistent with the study¹⁰ conducted in Chandigarh, India which shows that 23.6% and 28.3% knew obesity and aging respectively as risk factors of cancer.

Similarly, this study showed that 90% and 78% of the respondents were aware about chemical fertilizer and pesticides, unseasonal fruits and vegetables and plastic use respectively as risk factors of cancer.

The findings of the study showed that none of the respondents are aware of all the nine warning signs of cancer which is not consistent with the study¹⁰ conducted in Chandigarh, India which shows that 7.7% of the respondents had awareness of all the nine warning signs of cancer.

This study showed that 80% and 31% of respondents were aware that a sore that does not heal and nagging cough and hoarseness respectively are the warning signs of cancer which is not consistent with the study¹¹ conducted in India which shows that 17.4% and 8.0% of respondents had awareness that a sore that does not heal and nagging cough and hoarseness respectively are the warning signs of cancer.

The findings of the study showed that 23% of respondents were aware unusual bleeding as a warning sign of cancer which is consistent with the study¹¹ conducted in India which shows that 23.9% of respondents had awareness on unusual bleeding as a warning sign of cancer.

The study results showed that 62%, 31% and 15% of respondents were aware of unexplained weight loss, change in colour of mole and warts and change in bowel and bladder habit as warning signs of cancer respectively which is not consistent with the study¹⁰ conducted in Chandigarh, India which shows that 32.1%, 22.8% and 24.7% of respondents

had awareness of unexplained weight loss, change in colour of mole and warts and change in bowel and bladder habit as warning signs of cancer respectively.

This study reveals that 62% and 32% of the respondents were aware of unexplained persistent pain and difficulty in swallowing as warning signs of cancer respectively which is consistent with the study¹² conducted in Oman which shows that 58.8% and 28.1% of respondents knew that unexplained persistent pain and difficulty in swallowing as warning signs of cancer respectively.

This present study showed that 70% of the respondents were aware of abnormal lump or swelling in the body as a warning sign of cancer which is not consistent with the study¹² conducted in Oman which shows that 50.7% knew that abnormal lump or swelling in the body as a warning sign of cancer respectively.

The findings of the study showed that 88% of the respondents were aware of emotional barriers affecting health care seeking behaviours for cancer which is not consistent with the study¹³ conducted in Gaza, Palestine, which shows that 49.4% of the respondents were aware of emotional barriers affecting health care seeking behaviours for cancer.

The study shows that there was statistically significant association between respondents' level of awareness regarding cancer with education status ($p=0.011$) which is consistent with the study⁷ conducted in Chennai, India which shows that there was statistically significant association between respondents' level of awareness regarding cancer with education status ($p=0.025$)

CONCLUSION

Findings of the study revealed that there is inadequate awareness on cancer warning signs and risk factors among Nepalese adults which might prevent people in taking correct decision for health care on time.

Most of the respondents were aware of emotional barriers in seeking health care help. Thus, it can be inferred that there is need of educational interventions in raising awareness on cancer addressing emotional barriers. Also further research study can be conducted on general awareness on cancer among Nepalese adults as few studies have been conducted.

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