The study of women's awareness of breast cancer symptoms and screening methods

Introduction and purpose: One of the most common causes of cancer mortality in Iran is breast cancer, which in many cases is due to the lack of awareness of symptoms. Therefore, patients visit a gynecologist or surgeon with advanced-stage, which unfortunately causes far more deaths. Therefore this study aimed to assess the knowledge of women about breast cancer symptoms and screening methods.

Methods: The present study is a descriptive - cross-sectional which was measured Women's knowledge about breast cancer symptoms and its screening methods by using a questionnaire. On 386 individuals referred to a breast specialized center in Rasht in 2012. The obtained information was analyzed by statistical software SPSS and t-test, ANOVA, and Chi-square tests. A p-value < 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

Results: In this study, the patients' mean age was 30.41 ± 8.58 which (% 31.6) 122 people had a job and (% 46.4) 181 people were educated. The majority of them (% 58 / 8) knew that the existence of small lump (mass) in breast is the symptom of the breast cancer, besides % 53.6 of them knew that the bloody discharge from the breast is the symptom of the breast cancer, in which half of them were aware of how to examine their breast properly. 36% of people said that they haven't done breast Self Examination (BSE) because of lack of their knowledge about it. There was significant statistical association between the awareness of individuals about breast cancer symptom and participants age (p < 0.05). However, it was not observed the significant statistical association between the awareness and the other variables (education - occupation - marital status) (P > 0.05). Conclusion: Breast Self Examination is a simple, cheap and effective for screening and early detection of breast cancer. It is a valuable technique for many Iranians, especially in areas that do not access to diagnostic equipment such as mammograms. Thus, it can be a crucial step in the prevention and reduction of breast cancer by holding training programs specially due to raising awareness of individuals about breast cancer symptoms, developing BSE (breast self-examination) training programs and early detection of breast cancer.

Key words: awareness, breast lump (mass), breast self-examination, breast cancer symptom.