

Poster Presentation 18

SELF EXAMINATION OF BREAST – A STUDY ON MASTECTOMY PATIENTS

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Introduction

Self examination of breast (SEB) is a well accepted method for early detection of breast cancer. The risk of developing a recurrence at the mastectomy site or a malignancy in the remaining breast is high in patients who have already had a breast cancer and the role of SEB in these patients cannot be challenged. The study aimed to assess the knowledge and practice of SEB in post-mastectomy patients.

Method

Fifty consecutive patients who underwent mastectomy from 01-01-2007 at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka were followed up at 3 months and 1 year postoperatively. The knowledge and practices of SEB were assessed and the patients were educated accordingly irrespective of the existing level of knowledge at the initial follow up visit. All were provided with an information leaflet as well.

Results

Follow up at three months revealed that 48 (96 %) patients were aware on the importance of SEB as a tool for early detection of breast cancers. However, majority (96%) were not practicing it. The main reason was the misconception that SEB is not beneficial once a breast cancer has developed. The practices of the two patients performing SEB were associated with errors in the technique and timing. Patients were only interested on examining the remaining breast but not the mastectomy site. At 1 year all were aware on the importance of SEB while 44 (88 %) were practicing it. Although the technique was correct only 20(45%) of them were performing it at regular monthly basis. 6(14%) were overenthusiastic and performing SEB a few times per month. Mastectomy scar examination continued to be poor.

Conclusions

There was a considerable improvement in the number of patients performing SEB as well as its technique following education at the Breast clinic. However the frequency of SEB and the examination of mastectomy scar remained unsatisfactory.