

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EVALUATION OF BREAST CANCER
AWARENESS AMONG MALAYSIAN
UNDERGRADUATE PHARMACY STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

Breast cancer is the commonest cancer and third leading cause of cancer related deaths among Malaysian women. This study aimed to assess breast cancer awareness among undergraduate pharmacy students recruited from public and private universities. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using a validated structured self administered 27-item questionnaire. Forty undergraduate (Bachelor of Pharmacy) students from each academic year of the three (2 Public and 1 Private) conveniently selected universities were invited to participate in the study. Data analysis was carried out by using SPSS version 15.0 software package. Of 460 questionnaires distributed, 395 were returned (Response Rate = 82.3%). Majority of the respondents were female (75%). The mean total knowledge score was 13.43 ± 2.94 with only 86 (21.8%) of the participants had good breast cancer knowledge. The first year students had significantly less mean total knowledge score than third and final year students ($p < 0.001$). However, there was no significant difference between third and final year students ($p = 0.729$) and among different ethnic groups ($p = 0.93$). Generally, participants had positive perception towards the management and treatment outcomes of breast cancer. Though, more than 60% of the respondents considered breast cancer treatment as long and painful process. The study highlighted serious breast cancer knowledge deficits. Thus, issues related to public health, disease prevention and health promotion should be incorporated in to undergraduate pharmacy curriculum as Pharmacists can play a vital role in these key areas.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. Cancer cells do not respond to the normal processes that regulate cell growth, proliferation and survival and they cannot carry out the physiologic functions of their normal differentiated (mature) counterparts. (Lisa & Celeste, 2005). According to National Cancer Institute (NCI), breast cancer is defined as cancer that forms in tissues of the breast, usually the ducts (tubes that carry milk to the nipple) and lobules (glands that make milk). It occurs in both men and women, although male breast cancer is rare. There is a marked geographical difference in the worldwide incidence of breast cancer, with a higher incidence in developed countries compared to developing countries. Global statistics show that the annual incidence of breast cancer is increasing and this is occurring more rapidly in countries with a low incidence rate of breast cancer (Parkin *et al.*, 2002; Wilson *et al.*, 2004). In, 2002, breast cancer was reported as the most frequent form of cancer being treated in women (National Cancer Center, 2002) and in 2003 the death rate associated with the breast cancer ranked second among various types of cancers affecting female patients (Korean National Statistical Office, 2003).