

# Factors Responsible for Delay in Presentation of Carcinoma of Breast

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To identify factors responsible for delay in presentation of carcinoma of breast

**Patients and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted at Surgical Unit I Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore from January 2009 to April 2014. A total of 200 females were included. Diagnosis of breast carcinoma was based on histopathology. Factors such as lack of awareness about disease, lack of medical facility, management from quacks, hakeems and homeopathic medicines and spiritual healers were collected employing a short structured proforma.

**Results:** Lack of awareness was responsible for 69.5% of cases. Next common was lack of health facility responsible for 20.5% of cases. Management of quacks, Hakeems and homeopathic medicines was responsible for 6.5% of cases and Spiritual Healing was responsible for 3.5% of cases

**Conclusion:** It is strongly recommended that in Pakistan awareness about the disease should be increased and there is also a dire need of setting up medical facilities in Pakistan both in cities and also in remote areas so that carcinoma of breast should be detected early and be managed accordingly without any delay because these factors are preventable.

**Keywords:** Breast cancer, delayed presentation

## INTRODUCTIONS

Patients of carcinoma of breast are usually presenting late having stage III disease. Presentation with stage I disease is negligible. Delayed presentation of breast cancer is associated with lower survival rate. Moreover, the late stage of disease and high mortality rates are also seen with delay in diagnosis and management of carcinoma of breast <sup>(1)</sup>. The lowest levels of awareness were related to age, education and culture <sup>(2)</sup>. Delay in breast cancer presentation is defined as patient delay (the interval between first detection of symptom and first medical consultation) and system delay (the interval between first presentation to a medical professional and initial treatment). Prolonged delays are usually defined as intervals greater than 12 weeks. Hospital referral from a health care provider was a major contributor to delayed diagnosis <sup>(3)</sup>.

The aim of this cross-sectional study was to examine the factors which are responsible for the delay in presentation of breast carcinoma in Pakistan. Since most literature on late presentation of breast carcinoma is from developed countries, it was thought that study in developing country like

Pakistan can improve current knowledge and strategies about disease.

## PATIENTS AND METHOD

This cross-sectional study was conducted at Surgical Unit I, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore from January 2009 to April 2014. Two hundred females were included in the study. Diagnosis of breast cancer was based on histopathology.

A specifically designed short structured questionnaire was used to collect data regarding factors responsible for late presentation of carcinoma of breast cancer from each subject. Informed consent was taken from the subjects. Lack of awareness of the disease, lack of medical facility and management from quacks and Hakeems and spiritual healers were observed.

Collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences [SPSS] version 10.0

## RESULTS

200 patients with carcinoma breast were included in the study. The duration of presentation of patients with breast carcinoma ranges from 1.4 years to 5 months mean of which is 10.5 months. The results are tabulated below.

Sr. No.	Variables	Cases	Percentage
1.	Lack of awareness about disease	139	69.5%
2.	Lack of medical facility	41	20.5%
3.	Management from quacks, Hakeems and homeopathic medicines	13	6.5%
4.	Spiritual Healers	7	3.5%

## DISCUSSION

Patients of carcinoma of breast are presenting in locally advanced stage at our breast clinic in Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore.

The prognosis of breast cancer patients is dependent on size of tumour, number of lymph nodes involvement and lymphovascular invasion<sup>(4)</sup>. All these factors are enhanced when a patient presents with advanced disease.

In our present study, we tried to probe into the factors responsible for the delay in coming to hospital. It was observed that lack of awareness about the disease was responsible for majority of the delayed presentations. Patients were ignoring the lump as it is painless. They notice the disease when the lump attains a significant size or produce changes in nipple or fungates. This represents lack of awareness and indifferent attitude towards one's health.

Another big group was comprised of those patients who were deprived of health facility in their town, city or district. Women are shy to present to male doctors and this also resulted in deliberate delay on the part of female patients suffering from breast cancer. This stress the need of increasing the health centres with provision of lady doctors to be available for early diagnosis of the most common cancer among women. And, there is also need for increasing diagnostic centres for mammography to pick up early disease. Other studies have demonstrated that screening has beneficial effects in long-term mortality<sup>(5)</sup>.

The minor factors are quackery, spiritual healing and homeopathic medicines. They claim miraculous results but our observation has revealed that the most precious time during which the disease can be managed surgically is lost and tumour becomes inoperable or metastatic.

## CONCLUSION

Factors responsible for late presentation of the disease are all preventable. They are preventable by increasing awareness through media campaigns and by health educational programs regarding breast cancers. It is strongly recommended that health facility to detect a cancer in early stages should be available all over Pakistan.

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