

Abstract

Introduction: In Uganda, women are still dying of breast and cervical cancer, yet these two are preventable diseases. Cases of breast and cervical cancers usually present in the late stages and the outcome of the treatment is usually unsatisfactory. This study assessed the level of knowledge, attitude and practice of breast and cervical cancer screening among pregnant women attending Lubaga Hospital Antenatal Clinic.

Method: A cross sectional survey was conducted among pregnant women attending Lubaga Hospital Antenatal Clinic using an interviewer administered questionnaire to determine the level of knowledge, attitude and practices about breast and cervical cancer among young women. A sample of 400 respondents was randomly selected.

Results: Majority of the respondents had never heard about breast and cervical cancer, only 190 (47.5%) and 166 (41.5%) had heard about these two cancers. Only 24.2% (46) among those who had heard about breast cancer got information from health workers and 31.9% (53) respondents got cervical cancer information from the same people. Awareness that breast cancer might present as a painless breast lump and a change in colour may be a sign of cancer was known to more than half of the respondents; 212 (53%) and 243 (60,7%) respectively.

Three hundred and five (76.3%) were aware that vaginal bleeding may be a sign of cervical cancer and 61% (244) of the respondents were aware that early stages of cancer can be cured. Some respondents 53 (13%) thought that breast cancer is associated with not breast feeding, while 47% had no idea on the risk factors and 44.2% (177) were not knowledgeable on the risk factors of cervical cancer. More than half of the respondents were conversant that breast and cervical cancer can occur in young people (69.5% and 60% correspondingly). Two hundred and fifteen (53.75%) respondents reported that health workers never talked to them about breast and cervical cancer on their visit to hospital. Among the 134 respondents who had ever had a breast examination, 74 (18.5%) had their breasts examined by health workers and only 14.3% carried out a breast self examination. Two hundred and thirty three respondents had no knowledge on breast examination. The Bivariate analysis revealed there was a statistical association between ever heard about breast cancer, awareness that breast cancer is contagious with breast self examination. There was also an association between breasts self examination and breast ever been examined, marital status, age and ever had a breast problem, whereas cervical cancer screening had an association with occupation. There was correlation between cervical cancer screening and cervical cancer can be detected early and knowledge that early detection of cancer improves chances of survival.

Recommendations

There is need to health educate women on breast and cervical cancer screening. Cervical cancer services should be integrated in sexual and reproductive services provided by the health facilities.