

Knowledge and awareness of cancer among Umm Al-Qura University students (Al-Leith Colleges Campus) - Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Cancer caused over 8 million deaths worldwide in 2013 and has moved from the third leading cause of death in 1990 to the second leading cause behind cardiovascular disease in 2013. Cancer can be reduced and controlled by implementing evidence-based strategies for cancer prevention, early detection of cancer and management of patients with cancer. Many cancers have a high chance of cure if detected early and treated adequately. Cancer awareness has been shown to contribute to improvements in the early detection and management of disease. **Objective:** The current study aimed to evaluate and assess the level of knowledge and awareness of cancer among Umm Al-Qura University students - Al-Leith colleges campus - Saudi Arabia, the study covered different colleges include (health sciences, social, computer, and college of engineering). **Methods:** This is a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted in college of health sciences at Al-Leith, Umm Al-Qura University - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the period from August 2016 to April 2017. Data were collected using a questionnaires, 202 students were randomly selected, 106 (52%) of the students from health sciences college and the remaining 96 (48%) were from other faculties (social sciences, computer, and college of engineering). **Results:** The education level of students was as follows: 35 (17%) of students in the first level, 28 (14%) of students in the second level, 58 (29%) of students in the third level, and 81 (40%) of the fourth level. Most of the students from health sciences college (76%) were answered correctly define cancer, while about half of the students in the other faculties (56% only 58%) gave true definition of the disease. In terms of knowledge and awareness about risk factors for cancer, the study showed that most students aware by tobacco, alcohol, pesticides, preservative food, radiation, and obesity as cancer risks, but they did not know that viruses, bacteria, fungi, and sports inactivity were classified as risk factors for cancer. Most of the students involved in the current study were aware by lumps pain as cancer signs and symptoms, but at the same time, they do not aware by other signs and symptoms of the disease (skin ulcers, bleeding, low weight, and coughing), they gave low percent of positive results. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that students' awareness regarding cancer needs to be raised through educational and awareness programs.

Key words: Cancer, awareness, students

INTRODUCTION

Cancer caused over 8 million deaths worldwide in 2013 and has moved from the third leading cause of death in 1990 to the second leading cause behind cardiovascular disease in 2013.^[1] Substantial progress has been made in recent years with regard to prevention and treatment options for certain cancers.^[2]

The number of new cases is expected to rise by about 70% over the next 2 decades. Among men, the five most common sites of cancer diagnosed in 2012 were lung, prostate, colorectal, stomach, and liver cancer. Among women, the five most common sites diagnosed were breast, colorectal, lung, cervix, and stomach cancer.^[3]

If recent trends in major cancers are seen globally in the future, the burden of cancer will increase to 23.6 million new cases each

year by 2030. This represents an increase of 68% compared with 2012 (66% in low and medium HDI countries and 56% in high and very high HDI countries).^[4,5]

The most commonly diagnosed cancers in high HDI countries (according to the WHO classification, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) belong to this group of countries) are breast, lung, prostate, bowel, and stomach.^[3]

The ultimate goal of collecting cancer information is to prevent and control cancer and improve patient care.

To appropriately allocate resources to prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care and to monitor their effectiveness, it is necessary to have timely information about cancer burden for individual countries.

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