
Awareness of well woman clinic services among attendees to Anuradhapura on Poson poya day: are the socially deprived at a disadvantage?

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Background

Though the Well Woman Clinic (WWC) in Sri Lanka has been designed as the primary strategy for secondary prevention of breast and cervical cancers, whether we have yielded the utmost public health outcome from it is questionable.

Objective

To assess the awareness and the use of WWC for screening for these two malignant conditions among women aging more than 35 years (target group of WWC).

Methods

A rapid spot survey was conducted in the sacred city of Anuradhapura on 4th, June 2012 (Poson poya day). (Statistics show that this is the largest gathering of people representing a majority of areas in Sri Lanka on a single day.) The study sample included women aged 35 and above, who came to the premises on the day and those who consented to participate. This was done as a part of health promotion program conducted by MSU, FMAS.

Results

A total of 3116 females from 22 districts were interviewed. Mean age of the study sample was 52.6 years (SD 10.3 years). Risk of breast and cervical cancers in their age group was known only to 1150 (36.9%) and 1011 (32.4%) women respectively. Awareness on availability of WWC was 60.8%. However, only 578 (18.5%) have attended the WWC. Of the women reported as professionals or associate professionals (n=217), awareness on WWC was 87.6% compared to 58.8% among other occupation categories and housewives. Clinic attendance was also significantly higher (40.1% compared to 16.9%) among this group. Younger (<60years) women had a significantly higher awareness on WWC (64.7% compared to 48.2%) and a higher number of them (20.3% compared to 13.1%) have attended the WWC.

Conclusion

A gross social disparity was observed on WWC awareness and attendance. Health promotional programs should focus more on socially disadvantaged groups.