

### **Delayed presentation of symptomatic breast cancer and associated factors among patients referred to Tellippalai Trail Cancer Hospital**

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**Background:** Breast cancer is the commonest female malignancy in Sri Lanka. Late presentation is not uncommon, leading to poor survival outcomes. Delayed presentation of breast cancer is multifactorial. Hence, the present study aims to describe the factors influencing delayed presentation among patients with breast cancer referred to Tellippalai Trail Cancer Hospital.

**Methods:** This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted from 01st December 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Data were collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. Delay was defined as more than 3 months from the recognition of symptoms to presentation to a medical professional. The questionnaire consisted of questions assessing socio-demographic factors, tumour-related factors, knowledge, and psychosocial factors.

**Results:** In total, 151 patients participated in the study. Mean age of participants was 57 years. Majority of the patients were married (77%, n=116) and diagnosed with stage II disease (61.5%, n=93). Over half (53%, n=80) had consulted a medical professional three or more months after noticing the first symptom. Lack of knowledge about breast cancer (p=0.019), lack of knowledge on available treatment facilities (p=0.039), cultural beliefs (p=0.047) and past experiences of loved ones with cancer (p=0.017) were significantly associated with delayed presentation.

**Conclusion:** Lack of knowledge and cultural beliefs may lead to delayed presentation of breast cancer in Northern Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** Breast Cancer, Delayed Presentation, Jaffna