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Significance of Primary Care Healthcare Services in the Early Detection of Cancer

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Abstract

Holistic view and protective medicine are a must in the discipline family practise. Cancer is one of the diseases having the possibility of being detected early in the preventive medicine in routine practises, especially in middle and advanced age group. The most important mission is the primary healthcare services, which is the first contact point, in the early detection of disease groups, especially of cancers. In our article, we aimed to determine the significance of primary care healthcare services in the early detection of cancer and to raise awareness.

Keywords: Primary care; Cancer; Awareness

Dear Editor

The most common types of cancer are reported as lung (13.3%), colorectal (13.2%) and breast (13%) in Europe and worldwide. Among women cancers, breast cancer is the number one. Although mortality is decreased by the early detection of breast cancer, it is still an important health problem [1,2].

Significant improvements have been done in USA, in where primary healthcare services are too strong, over the last five decades. For example, while cervical cancer is the primary reason of cancer-related mortality previously, now it has regressed to 13th line by the activation of protective medicine lately. Spreading Pap smear scanning program is one of the important reasons for this improvement [3,4].

The incidence of breast cancer increases by age [5]. Its incidence rapidly increases after the age of thirty; it becomes stable at the age between 45 and 50. Risk factors for breast cancer include age, familial history of breast cancer, genetic and environmental factors, obesity, diet, alcohol, radiation, breast feeding and menopause, previous breast cancer history and benign breast diseases. Although we have not a certain protecting method for breast cancer, early detection is life-saving. The most basic methods in breast cancer scanning might be sorted as breast examination, ultrasonography and mammography. These methods must be accessible in primary healthcare services [2].

According to the results of International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), cervical cancer is the second common cancer type among women aged between 15 and 44 years, and approximately 500,000 new diagnoses are increasing every year. Every two minutes a woman loses her life worldwide. Moreover, cervical cancer is considered as the third reason of cancer-related deaths. Cervical scanning is the most significant method in the early detection of cervical cancer and precancerous lesions, and it must become widespread in the primary care services [2-6]. In a study performed by Kringos et al., the most extensive and comprehensive service in the healthcare system was stated as the reason of being the first contact point of primary care system [7].

In general, the ratio of patients who are referred to secondary and tertiary care decreases to 15% in countries having strong primary care system, and family physicians are giving satisfactory answers to the healthcare needs of 85% of patients. In countries having developed primary care system, the ratio of hospitalization depending on preventable conditions is lower, and the significant reduction in the mortality ratios depending on all reasons, especially post neonatal mortality, cancer, major respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, was verified in various studies [8,9].

It is predicted that better solutions can be provided to healthcare needs of the community; it will be possible to deliver more equitable and more cost-efficient healthcare services in countries providing strong primary healthcare services. In countries having low-share of health expenses in gross national product, in other words having strong primary healthcare system, increasing cost efficiency is predicted in the presentation of healthcare services [8-10].

Primary healthcare services have importance in terms of early detection of particularly cervical and breast cancer, and as well as colon cancer and other cancer types. The advantages of early detection of cancer in primary healthcare services are 'accessibility and sustainability, coordination role, the absence of additional cost along with providing comprehensive healthcare services [11]. Early detection methods are improved by means of world-wide spread of scanning programs. Therefore, our knowledge level regarding the exact prevalence of this disease group, and validity/ reliability of recent researches are increased directly. It is necessary to improve education regarding this issue and knowledge levels of all healthcare professionals. Efficient and appropriate use of scanning programs in primary healthcare services will become prevalent only by this means.

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