Identifying Barriers to Care for Adult Patients with Cancer in Tanzania

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Introduction

• Most cancers present at advanced stage in Tanzania which contributes to high mortality rates.
• Several of these cancers are preventable or treatable if diagnosed early.
• The factors leading to delay in treatment in northern Tanzania are unknown.
• The purpose of this study was to identify barriers to cancer treatment in adult patients with cancer at a large referral hospital in Northern Tanzania.

Methods

• Ethical approval and informed consent obtained.
• 250 adult patients with new diagnosis of cancer were surveyed at KCMC Cancer Care Centre (CCC) in 1-year period, between July 2018-June 2019.
• Adapted survey instrument was used and included questions about demographics, delay time, and specific barriers to seeking care.
• Hospital records were examined for diagnosis and stage.
• Descriptive statistics performed with SPSS.

Sample Survey Question

• How many times were you seen by a healthcare provider before presenting to the cancer center?
• Where was the first, second, third, etc medical facility you sought care?
• Specific barriers to seeking care:
  • I was not concerned about my symptoms
  • I was afraid I might have cancer
  • The clinic was too far away for travel

Results

*Delayed presentation: Time from first onset of symptoms to first presentation at KCMC Cancer Care Centre >3 months

Top 5 Cancer Types All Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cancer Stage</th>
<th>All Cases</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Most Common Barriers to Care All Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I thought the treatment might be too expensive</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>67.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clinic was too far away to travel</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>33.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t know what cancer was</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pain/swelling/lump, etc didn’t bother me</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought the symptoms would go away</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

The barriers to seeking cancer care in northern Tanzania were centered around lack of cancer awareness and access to care. To help reduce these barriers, education is needed regarding cancer awareness, recognition of cancer symptoms and availability of financial assistance.

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References


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