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SUWASIRIPAYA

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General Circular Letter No :

All Provincial Directors of Health Services,
All Regional Directors of Health Services,
All Heads of Institutions,
MO/MCH, MOs/NCD,
Medical Officers of Health (MOOH)

World Breast Cancer Awareness Month – October 2014

Breast cancer is the commonest neoplasm amongst the Sri Lankan females. The age standardized incidence rate (ASR) for breast cancer was 21.8 per 100,000 female population, accounting for the highest percentage of cancer (25%) among females in 2008 while age-standardized incidence rate for breast cancer has risen significantly from 1985 to 2008. Further, breast cancer has the highest age standardized mortality rate (4.7 per 100,000) out of all cancers among females in Sri Lanka.

Even though breast cancer is the commonest amongst women, it has a very good prognosis if detected in the early stages. The five-year survival rate is higher, if detected and treated early and promptly. Hence, detecting breast cancer at an early stage, would result in, not only in prolonged survival, but also higher chances to be cured, receiving more conservative surgery, preserving the body image and less aggressive treatment options/methods.

The methods used in early detection of breast cancer are breast self-examination, clinical breast examination and mammography. Even though, the above strategies are offered, considerable percentage of breast cancer are detected at a late stage. This could be, probably, due to lack of

awareness under-utilization of the available breast cancer early detection facilities. This identifies the requirement to enhance and strengthening the activities already been carried out to increase awareness of early detection of breast cancer amongst the health professionals as well as the general population. To achieve this objective, the National Cancer Control Programme has already formulated a set of guidelines and communicated the same in the form of handbooks to primary health care physicians and primary health care workers. Further, district level trainers are trained on breast cancer early detection methods and health education materials are given to the public.

October is the breast cancer awareness month celebrated by all countries around the world, during this period. In addition, it supports for the early detection and treatment of the disease as well as for its palliative care.

It is proposed to conduct programmes to strengthen the early detection and treatment of breast cancer throughout the country, at National, Provincial, District, Divisional and Community level.

The strategies recommended are:

- Increasing awareness among females on early detection of breast lesions and presenting to health care institutions for advise at the early stage
- Enhancing the knowledge and skill levels of the health care providers on 'timely' detection, referral and treatment of breast cancer
- Improve facilities and service levels of primary health care centre, including well women's clinic, healthy life style clinics and breast clinics to enable the early detection of breast cancer

National Cancer Control Programme is planning to organize programmes at National level and to implement the same the Regional level. For ensuring the sustainability of this programme, it is very important to integrate these activities at Divisional, District and Provincial levels with the responsibility of Provincial and Regional Directors of Health Services.

The following activities are planned during the programme for implementation;

1. Lectures, discussions and training of trainer (TOT) programmes for Medical Officers of Health, Primary Care Medical Officers and General Practitioners with the participation of resource personnel at Provincial or District level (eg. Consultant Surgeons, Consultant Oncosurgeons, Consultant Radiologists, Consultant Oncologists etc).

2. In-service training programmes for Primary Health Care staff with special focus on early detection of breast cancer
3. Launching a CD on Breast self examination
4. Lectures and discussions with the participation of volunteers, school teachers, university students, staff of government or private sector organizations, garment factory workers, estate workers etc
5. Health education on early detection of breast cancer at clinics in hospitals and MOH clinics
6. Enhancing the activities related to breast cancer early detection and management at well women clinics, healthy life style clinics, surgical clinics, breast clinics and mobile clinics
7. Promote community awareness on breast cancer early detection through, breast cancer awareness walks, exhibitions, distribution of leaflets etc
8. Strengthening of the existing health education programmes, utilizing the mobile health education units of Health Education Officers of the Districts with the coordination and assistance of the Primary health care staff
9. Activities promoting institution-based and community-based palliative care services for breast cancer patients and survivors of breast cancer

MO/NCDs and MO/MCHs are to co-ordinate District level activities, and Heads of health institutions/MOH areas to conduct at least one special programme in their respective Health institution/MOH area. Heads of the Health Institutions and MOH of the area will have to carry out the planning and implementation of the said programme.

Your leadership, guidance and active participation in this programme will be appreciated.

If you need further information, please contact Director, National Cancer Control Programme on 0112368627 or on email-nccpsl@yahoo.com.



Director General of Health Services
Ministry of Health

Copies:

1. Hon. Minister- Ministry of Health
2. Hon. Deputy Minister – Ministry of Health
3. All Hon. Provincial Health Ministers
4. Secretary- Ministry of Health

5. Additional Secretary (Medical Services) – Ministry of Health
6. Additional Secretary (Public Health Services) – Ministry of Health
7. All DDGs – Ministry of Health
8. All Provincial Health Secretaries
9. Director- FHB, NCD, HEB, PHC, NIHS, Private Health Sector Development