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சுகாதாரம் அமைச்சு  
Ministry of Health

General Circular Letter No: 02-118 / 2023

All Provincial Directors of Health Services (PDHS)  
All Regional Directors of Health Services (RDHS)  
All Heads of Institutions  
Medical Officers of Health (MOOH)

**World Breast Cancer Awareness Month – October 2023**

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Sri Lanka, it accounts for approximately 26% of all newly diagnosed cancers detected among females in a single year. According to the cancer registry data, 5189 new cases had been detected in 2020. Increasing incidence of breast cancers is noted over the past 25 years.

'Breast Cancer Awareness Month' is commemorated worldwide during the month of October every year to increase public awareness and action for early detection, prompt diagnosis, treatment and survivorship care for patients with breast cancers.

Most patients with breast cancer have a very good prognosis if detected and treated promptly at the early stages. In addition to high cure rates, the benefits of early detection include greater possibilities of conservative surgery preserving the body image together with less aggressive treatment options leading to reduction of cost of care.

Early detection of breast cancers is facilitated by,

- Raising public awareness on symptoms and signs of breast abnormalities ('බව විසින්, බව වෙනුවෙන්') (Annex I)
- Self Breast Examination (SBE)
- Clinical Breast Examination (CBE)

The services for early detection of breast cancers are available at the 'Well Woman Clinics' and Healthy Life-style Centres throughout the country. In addition, 'Breast Clinics' established at selected tertiary/ secondary care hospitals supplement the early detection programme (Annex II). The backup diagnostic mammography services (Annex III) and pathological services are expanded throughout the country to accelerate the process of diagnosis of breast cancer.


From this year, the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) has started involving additional stakeholders to uplift cancer prevention and to promote breast cancer awareness to improve early detection. The initial group will be the professional beauticians. The NCCP has developed special health promotional material for this concept and is working along with them.

Medical Officers of Health (MOOH) and Medical Officers in Charge of Primary Medical Care Institutions are requested to conduct the activities mentioned below in your area with the support of the Regional Director of Health Services, Consultant Community Physicians, Medical Officer/Maternal & Child Health (MO/MCH), Medical Officer/ Non-Communicable Diseases (MO/NCD) and Regional Supervising Public Health Nursing Officers.

1. Conducting lectures, discussions and training of trainer (TOT) programmes, in-service training programmes on breast cancer early detection at hospital level and each Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area.
2. These activities could be supplemented by the promotion of **enhanced activities** related to early detection of breast cancer and management at Well Women Clinics, Healthy Life Style Centres, surgical clinics, breast clinics, Cancer Early Detection Centres and mobile cancer screening clinics.
3. It is advisable to decorate Out Patient Departments & clinics in hospitals and all clinics conducted by the MOH staff; using **pink** tapes, balloons or a suitable eye cartching and cost-effective decoration during the month of October to spread the messages with regard to breast cancer, where logistically possible: since pink is the internationally accepted **colour theme** to honor survivors, remember the deceased, and to support the progress we are making towards defeating breast cancer. These initiatives could be introduced to the private sector and non government sector through the active participation of civil society organizations.
4. A '**Breast Cancer Awareness Desk**' or "**Breast Cancer Awareness Hot-line**" could be set up in hospitals and other healthcare institutions, providing information on breast cancer. At the desk, the healthcare staff, such as Nursing Officers, Public Health Nursing Officers (PHNO) or Public Health Midwives could answer questions asked by the public on breast cancer and provide any other relevant information through IEC materials.
5. **Social media** could be used to spread the message of prevention and early detection of breast cancer using Facebook/Web page of the institution, through Whatsapp or Viber groups. You can post the e-material attached here with this circular accordingly. This can also be used to encourage community mobilizations like the Mother Support groups, Mahila Samithi/ Kantha Samithi, and get the help of the local NGOs eg: Rotary, Lions, Innerwheel, Zonta, etc.
6. As professional beauticians have been identified as an additional channel for imparting breast cancer awareness among females, please take necessary action to provide technical guidance and support to promote this activity in your area. The health promotional material will be shared in digital form with this communique (Annex IV).

IEC materials and health education material already distributed by the National Cancer Control Programme to the regions such as leaflets, flash cards on Self Breast Examination (SBE), mannequins on SBE, banners on Breast Cancer Awareness month etc could be utilized for the above-mentioned awareness programmes. Your leadership, guidance and active participation in this national endeavour would be much appreciated.

You are advised to submit a summary report on the special activities conducted by your institution, district to commemorate World Breast Cancer Awareness month - October 2023 to reach the Director - National Cancer Control Programme, on or before the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. Report can be submitted via email to: [nccpmohsl@gmail.com](mailto:nccpmohsl@gmail.com).

  
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Dr. Asela Gunawardena  
**Director General of Health Services**

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- Cc: 1. Hon. Minister of Health  
2. Secretary, Ministry of Health  
3. Additional Secretary (PHS)  
4. Additional Secretary (MS)  
5. All Secretaries – Provincial Ministry of Health  
6. All DDGs  
7. Director – NCCP, MCH, NCD, HPB, PHC, NIHS, PHSD