

**Early Detection Saves Lives:
Diagnosed Stage at the Time of Presentation of Breast
Cancer, Time Taken to Seek Treatments and Factors
Associated with Treatment Delay in Female Patients at
Apeksha Hospital and University Hospital of
Kotelawala Defence University**

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Breast cancer is the commonest cancer in Sri Lanka and accounts for 30.0% of cancer diagnoses. Delay in presentation is associated with increased morbidity, mortality and decreased survival. The aim of this study is to assess the correlation between the diagnosed stage at time of presentation of breast cancer, time taken to seek treatment and factors associated with delay in presentation in a cohort of female breast cancer patients at Apeksha hospital and University Hospital, KDU. This was a hospital based cross-sectional descriptive study using a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire. The cohort consisted of 121 women. Mean age was 56.9 years. Most patients (70.2%) were found with early-stage breast cancer, 26.4% were with local advanced cancer and, 3.3% with metastatic breast cancer. A majority (34.7%) had presented within 7 days of noticing symptoms while 15.7 % had delayed medical care for more than 3 months. the majority of the patients (67.8%) sought treatment after noticing first symptom, while 17.4% presented only upon aggravation of first symptom. Significantly delayed presentation was associated with advanced stage, negative family history and lack of knowledge about common breast cancer symptoms. Among patients who self-identified as having significant delay, the commonest reason ascribed was ignorance of mild symptoms. Most respondents in this study (84.2%) had presented to healthcare facilities without significant delay which is a positive improvement compared in comparison to previous studies. Steps must be taken on further improving knowledge and awareness on breast cancer symptoms among women.

Keywords: *breast cancer, stage of presentation, reasons for delay*