

The Effectiveness of Regular Breast Self Examination Combined with BSE Record Handbook Utilization in early detection of Breast Carcinoma in Thailand : A Cohort Study (Phase I)
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Abstract

Background: The reform of the Breast Self Examination (BSE) program (2012-2017) which consisted of the BSE combined with the use of BSE record handbook and the strengthened referral service networking system has been launched in 21 provinces, Thailand. The program engaged the VHVs to empower women to do BSE regularly (at least once every two months) and to record the findings in their own BSE handbooks. The handbook was designed to be the manual as well as the record book. The BSE practice recorded in the handbook has to be verified by the VHV, then the health personnel at the sub district level will confirm and consult the more competent person in case of any breast lumps or abnormalities found. The referral service networking system was also strengthened to improve accessibility to medical care for early definite diagnosis and treatment of breast carcinoma which is the most common carcinoma among Thai women.

Objective: The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the regular BSE in the first phase of the reformed BSE program.

Method: This was a cohort study conducted in 21 provinces that voluntarily participated. All women aged 30-70 years who were living in the study sites during October - December 2012 were recruited. The study tools were BSE record handbook and the recording and reporting system from individuals up to sub district level, district level and provincial level. Then all data on BSE, suspicious mass detection, definite diagnosis and the result of tissue pathology were sent online to the Health Promotion Center Region 4, Department of Health (DOH) for analysis. This study covered the period from October 2012 to May 2015.

Results: 1,914,892 women aged 30-70 years were registered and were followed up continuously. The findings showed that the active participation of well trained VHVs and the energetic effort of the health service providers at all levels in the province with regular supervision and monitoring from the provincial level and technical support from the Thanyarak Breast Foundation and the DOH had help increased regular BSE. The overall percentage of regular BSE were 64.6, 74.6 and 67.6 in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively. The highest percentage (81%) of regular BSE was found in the northeastern region where 1,016,952 women were recruited. After suspicious masses were detected the strengthened referral service networking system enhanced the women to receive the proper diagnosis and treatment. Of all women registered, 1123 new breast carcinoma cases were reported during October 2012 - May 2015. Most of the breast carcinoma patients were found to be at early stage (TNM0,1,2), 68.7% in 2014 and 64.4% in 2015. The mean cancer size seemed to decrease, they were 28.1, 26.74 and 26.63 mm. in 2013-2015. During the same period the size that equal or less than 20 mm. were 42.6%, 46.6% and 43.1%. Apparently, the cancer size (≤ 20 mm.) and the early stage breast carcinoma of the regular BSE group and the non regular BSE group of the northeastern region were significantly different, the regular BSE group had smaller cancer size (≤ 20 mm.) and earlier staging carcinoma than the non regular BSE group.

Conclusion: The emphasis of the regular BSE combined with the utilization of the BSE record handbook and the improved referral service networking system had effectively enhanced the opportunity for early diagnosis and early treatment of the breast carcinoma.

Key words: Breast Self Examination, BSE record handbook, effectiveness, referral system, carcinoma

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