

Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry Releases Breast Cancer Facts In Hong Kong Report No.2 Private hospital found higher ratio of in-situ breast cancer

(15 September 2010 – Hong Kong) The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation released the “Breast Cancer Facts in Hong Kong Report No.2” which analyses data from more than 2,000 breast cancer cases. The publication revealed that just less than 20% of breast cancer cases were detected through regular breast screening, which is comparatively lower than in other countries. Patients have shown relatively low awareness to breast screening and examination. Women aged 40 or above are at risk of breast cancer, yet the proportion of having regular breast screening habits of this group is relatively low.

The report probes into differences in characteristics of breast cancer and treatment options of breast cancer patients who use different medical facility. The results showed that the majority of patients received a mix of private and public medical care. On the distribution of cancer stages at the time of diagnosis, the highest ratio of stage 0 cases (in-situ breast cancer) was found in patients with complete private medical care (13.6%), while the figure for total public medical care was 5.7%. The tumour sizes of invasive breast cancers were generally found to be larger in patients with complete public medical care, whose mastectomy rates were also higher.

Breast Cancer Facts in Hong Kong Report No.2 – Summary of Findings

Characteristics

- The median age at diagnosis was 48.8 years.
- The most common risk factors are lack of exercise (less than 3 hours per week), no breast feeding, obesity or being overweight and under high levels of stress.
- Over 85% of the patients did not have a family history with breast cancer.

Screening Habit

- Patients, especially older women, have shown relatively low awareness of the need for regular breast screening.
- Nearly 80% of breast cancer cases were self-detected by chance, of which 90% of patients presented with painless lumps.
- The median tumour size of screen-detected patients was 1.4 cm, smaller than that of self-detected patients.

Treatment

- A majority (approximately 40%) of patients received a mix of private and public medical

care for breast cancer.

- Compared to their peers receiving completely private medical care, patients receiving completely public medical care exhibited (i) fewer early stage tumours, (ii) larger tumour sizes, and (iii) more tumours affecting the lymph node.
- Patients whose breast cancers were detected at an early stage have lower rates of mastectomy and chemotherapy.
- Amongst all treatments, patients expressed the most discomfort after chemotherapy

“Early Detection Saves Lives”

Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry Steering Committee Chairman and veteran surgeon **Dr. Polly Cheung** stated ‘Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry will complement the work of other registries on breast cancer in Hong Kong and collect previously unknown breast cancer facts in Hong Kong. Since its establishment in 2007, the Registry has been expanding the scale of data collection to private and public hospitals/clinics. It is the first, most comprehensive and representative local registry on breast cancer with over 4,000 breast cancer patients and survivors. In the long run, the Registry will monitor the trends of breast cancer in Hong Kong and deepen our understanding of (i) the risk factors, (ii) the survival rates of different treatment options and (iii) the importance of regular breast screening in order to mitigate negative impacts of breast cancer such as the rates of suffering and death.’ She pointed out that the Registry proactively follows-up on the latest status of each patient to capture post-treatment clinical outcome. These statistics are valuable references to both patients and healthcare professionals.

Participating hospitals and clinics include 7 private hospitals and clinics, six out of seven public hospitals with an oncology centre, the breast surgery centres of 4 public hospitals, as well as the Department of Oncology of the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Kowloon West Cluster Chief Of Service, Clinical Oncology and Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry Steering Committee Member **Dr. Yau Chun-Chung** remarked, ‘The Report reveals that most breast cancer cases were not inherited but were closely related to dietary habits, lifestyle habits, stress level and environment. Prevention of breast cancer is of the utmost importance. Early detection of breast cancer through breast screening can significantly alleviate the financial burden on both systems of personal and public health care.’ He noted that the Registry has yet to show any discrepancy or difference in the standards of treatment in public and private medical care, so members of the public should not feel worried on this point.

Ms. Ho, who was diagnosed of stage 2 breast cancer in 2007 shared her experiences in treating breast cancer. A week after her diagnosis, Ms. Ho received surgery in a private

hospital, after which she opted for post-surgery care (Radiation therapy and chemotherapy) in Princess Margaret Hospital, a public hospital. 'After diagnosis, I wanted to remove the tumor as soon as possible. Yet in view of the limited resources and longer queues in public hospitals, I opted for surgery in a private hospital. I chose to receive the year-long post-surgery care in a public hospital within my neighbourhood. I am pleased with the level of service in the public hospital and have never been worried that the quality of care would be different. Chemo medication used in public and private hospitals are the same.' said Ms. Ho.



Dr. Polly Cheung and Dr. C C Yau announced the findings of the latest Breast Cancer Facts in Hong Kong Report No. 2 .

(Photo: HKBCF)



Elizabeth, breast cancer survivor shared the importance of regular breast screening and work-life balance. (Photo: HKBCF)