

To: Assignment Editors, Managing Editors and Reporters
(For Immediate Release)

Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry Report No. 15 Press Conference

Mammogram Screening Saves Lives, Saves Treatment Cost

(Hong Kong, 26 September 2023) The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry (HKBCR), run by the Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF), launched its 15th annual research report at a press conference in HKBCF Jockey Club Breast Health Centre (Kowloon) today. The report aimed to bring better understanding of the clinical and economic impact of mammography, which is crucial for healthcare resource allocation and policy-making.

The study revealed that the average cost of breast cancer treatment was lower by 28.4% with mammography detection method compared with self-detection, mainly driven by downstaging of breast cancer and less intensive cancer treatment at the time of diagnosis. Implementation of mammography in a 100,000-person cohort aged 40 saves HK\$774.6 million on cost of treatment in the long run.

In 2020, 4,956 women were diagnosed with breast cancer and about 14 women dies from breast cancer every week on average. Screening of breast cancer with mammography should be encouraged to remedy the alarming situation.

Dr. Polly CHEUNG, Founder of the HKBCF, said the BCF Report No.15 findings reflected unsatisfactory breast screening habits in Hong Kong. Among the 19,179 patients who were diagnosed between 2006 and 2018 and recruited in the HKBCF, two-thirds were aged between 40 and 59. Of the patients aged 40 or above, 66.7% had never undergone mammography, while less than a quarter had regular mammogram.

Separate analyses were done on breast cancer patients diagnosed from 2019 onwards to partial out the impact of COVID-19, as the number of registration dropped under the pandemic and caused the skew of the public-private distribution of participants. Nonetheless, primary method of first breast cancer detection was still self-detection by chance (63.4%), while detection through mammography screening constituted 23.8%.

To understand the clinical implications and economic impact of self-detection and mammography detection methods, the report included a retrospective cohort study into 15,144 eligible participants diagnosed between 2006 and 2018, who were either self-detected or mammography-detected cases and with no missing data on cancer stage and biological subtype.

Lower stage at diagnosis for mammography-detected breast cancer

Among the participants, 13,502 were self-detected breast cancer cases and 1,642 mammography detected. **Dr. Lawrence Li, Member of Management Committee, HKBCF**, highlighted that the stage at diagnosis of mammography-detected breast cancer was lower than that of those self-detected. Nearly 97% of mammography-detected breast cancer cases were diagnosed at early stages of 0 (33.2%), I (48.3%) and II (15.3%), whereas about 20% of self-detected breast cancer cases were diagnosed at late stages of III (17.1%) and IV (1.9%).

A subgroup analysis looked into 6,359 breast cancer patients, with 5,817 self-detected breast cancer cases and 542 mammography-detected. **Dr. Li** supplemented that the overall 10-year survival was higher in mammography-detected breast cancer patients, with an estimated rate of 95.7%, compared with 88.4% for self-detected breast cancer patients.

Lower average treatment cost for mammography-detected cases

Prof. Kelvin TSOI, Member of HKBCR Steering Committee, HKBCF further explained that the downstaging of breast cancer detected by mammography at the time of diagnosis contributed to a significant lower average treatment cost compared with self-detected breast cancer. The average cost of treatment of each mammography-detected breast cancer (HK\$361,069) was lower than that of self-detected breast cancer (HK\$504,200).

The report included an additional model stimulation study. Comparing the two breast cancer detections methods in the report, there were an estimation of 5,314 breast cancer cases in a cohort of 100,000 average-risk women starting from the age of 40. The estimated overall cost of treatment in the stimulated cohort was HK\$2,402.1 million with self-detection method and HK\$1,627.5 million with mammography-detection method. In another words, implementation of mammography as detection method saved HK\$774.6 million in the cohort in the long run.

Seeing the clinical and economic benefits brought by mammogram breast cancer screening, **Dr. Eliza Fok, Chairman of the HKBCF**, called for the government to step up the risk-based Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme and expressed wishes that a population-wide breast cancer screening will be implemented to safeguard women's health.

“Early detection saves lives,” **Dr. Fok** reiterated, while urging women aged 40 and above to build up a habit for regular breast screening taking mammography screening every two years.

Please go to this link for the event press, release, slides, bulletins and photos:

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