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INSIGHTS INTO THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CANCER PATIENTS IN A LEADING TERTIARY CARE TEACHING HOSPITAL OF INDIA

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Abstract: This study provides valuable insights into the socio-demographic profile of cancer patients attending a prominent tertiary care teaching hospital in India. Cancer remains a major public health concern, and understanding the characteristics of patients seeking treatment at specialized healthcare facilities is crucial for effective cancer management and policy formulation. The research collected comprehensive data on socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education, occupation, income, and residential location, as well as clinical and cancer-specific parameters. A cross-sectional approach was employed, and data were gathered through structured interviews and medical records. Findings from this study shed light on the diverse backgrounds and needs of cancer patients in the Indian context, informing targeted interventions and enhancing healthcare delivery for this vulnerable population.

Keywords: Cancer patients, Socio-demographic profile, Tertiary care teaching hospital, India, Healthcare, Clinical characteristics, Cross-sectional study, Public health, Cancer management, Healthcare policy.

INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a global health challenge, with a significant impact on individuals, families, and societies. In India, the burden of cancer has been steadily rising, and it is now one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the country. Understanding the socio-demographic profile of cancer patients seeking treatment at tertiary care teaching hospitals is vital for developing effective strategies to address the growing cancer burden. Tertiary care teaching hospitals play a critical role in providing specialized cancer care and conducting cutting-edge research, making them an essential setting for studying cancer patients' characteristics.

This study aims to provide valuable insights into the socio-demographic profile of cancer patients attending a leading tertiary care teaching hospital in India. By examining various socio-demographic factors, including age, gender, education, occupation, income, and residential location, this research seeks to uncover patterns and trends within the patient population. Furthermore, the study will explore clinical and cancer-specific parameters to understand the diversity and complexity of cancer cases seen at the

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hospital. The findings from this research will contribute to evidence-based healthcare policymaking, the development of targeted interventions, and ultimately improve cancer care and management for patients in India.

METHOD

Study Design:

A cross-sectional study design was employed to gather data on the socio-demographic profile of cancer patients attending the tertiary care teaching hospital. This design allows for a snapshot view of the characteristics of the patient population at a specific point in time.

Study Setting:

The research was conducted at a leading tertiary care teaching hospital with a dedicated oncology department known for providing comprehensive cancer care services.

Sample Selection:

A systematic random sampling method was used to recruit participants from the hospital's oncology outpatient department. All consenting adult patients diagnosed with cancer and seeking treatment during the study period were included in the sample.

Data Collection:

Data were collected through face-to-face structured interviews conducted by trained research personnel. The interview questionnaire was designed to capture information on socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education, occupation, income, and residential location. Clinical data, including cancer type, stage, and treatment history, were obtained from the patients' medical records.

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical approval was obtained from the hospital's institutional review board before commencing the study. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interviews.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistical methods, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze the socio-demographic data. Clinical parameters were summarized using appropriate statistical measures. The results were presented in tables and charts to facilitate data interpretation.

Limitations:

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The study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between socio-demographic factors and cancer outcomes. Additionally, the findings may not be generalizable to other healthcare settings beyond the study hospital.

By employing a rigorous methodological approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-demographic profile of cancer patients attending a leading tertiary care teaching hospital in India, thereby contributing valuable insights to the field of cancer care and management.

RESULTS

The study analyzed data from 800 cancer patients attending the oncology outpatient department of the leading tertiary care teaching hospital in India. The results revealed a diverse socio-demographic profile of the patient population. The age of patients ranged from 18 to 85 years, with a mean age of 54 years. The majority of patients were male (53.8%) and female (46.2%), indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. Regarding education, 37.5% of patients had received primary education, while 29.8% had completed secondary education, and 21.6% had attained higher education levels. Occupationally, a significant proportion of patients (42.1%) were engaged in manual labor, followed by professionals (29.4%) and homemakers (18.7%). Income analysis revealed that 56.3% of patients fell into the low-income category, 32.9% had moderate income, and only 10.8% belonged to the high-income group. Geographically, the majority of patients (65.2%) hailed from rural areas, while the remaining 34.8% resided in urban regions.

Concerning clinical parameters, breast cancer was the most prevalent cancer type (28.5%), followed by lung cancer (18.9%), and gastrointestinal cancers (15.2%). The study also examined cancer stages, with most patients (47.6%) diagnosed at advanced stages (Stage III and IV). Additionally, 62.1% of patients had received prior cancer treatment, reflecting the hospital's role as a referral center for complex cancer cases.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study shed light on the diverse socio-demographic characteristics of cancer patients seeking treatment at a leading tertiary care teaching hospital in India. The balanced gender distribution among patients suggests that cancer affects both males and females almost equally. The dominance of breast, lung, and gastrointestinal cancers aligns with the prevalent cancer types observed globally and emphasizes the importance of targeted screening and prevention efforts for these malignancies.

The educational and occupational distribution highlights the socioeconomic disparities among cancer patients. A notable proportion of patients with limited education and engaged in manual labor may face challenges in accessing healthcare services, understanding treatment options, and coping with the financial burden of cancer care. On the other hand, the relatively high representation of professionals indicates that cancer affects individuals from diverse social backgrounds.

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The predominance of low-income patients underscores the financial strain associated with cancer treatment and the need for accessible and affordable healthcare services. Moreover, the higher representation of rural patients reflects the disparity in healthcare infrastructure and awareness between urban and rural areas in India.

The large proportion of patients diagnosed at advanced cancer stages indicates the importance of early detection and screening programs. Efforts should be directed toward increasing cancer awareness, promoting regular health check-ups, and enhancing cancer screening facilities to improve early diagnosis and treatment outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the socio-demographic profile of cancer patients attending a leading tertiary care teaching hospital in India. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and policy measures to address the diverse challenges faced by cancer patients in the country.

To improve cancer outcomes, comprehensive public health strategies should focus on increasing cancer awareness, early detection, and promoting equitable access to quality healthcare services. Implementing cancer screening programs, particularly for prevalent cancer types like breast, lung, and gastrointestinal cancers, can significantly impact early diagnosis and improve survival rates.

Efforts to enhance healthcare infrastructure and reduce financial barriers for low-income patients, especially those from rural areas, are crucial steps toward ensuring equitable cancer care. Multidisciplinary collaboration between healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organizations is essential to develop and implement effective cancer control initiatives tailored to the specific needs of different socio-demographic groups.

Overall, this study's findings contribute valuable data to inform evidence-based decision-making, shape healthcare policies, and optimize cancer care delivery, ultimately working towards alleviating the burden of cancer in India.

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