

Raising Breast Cancer Awareness in Rural Peru

University of Washington School of Medicine, IHOP-III-3

Meghan Johnston 2008

Purpose

To raise awareness regarding breast cancer and early detection, to provide clinical breast exams, and to teach self-breast exams.

Background

In Peru, there are 20,759 new cases of breast cancer each year and seventy-five percent of patients are diagnosed when the cancer has reached clinical stages II or III.¹

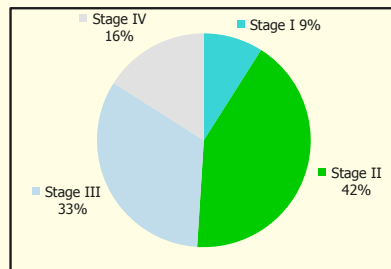
While self-breast exams have come under recent scrutiny, there is evidence that they can reduce mortality in resource-poor settings.^{2,3}

The following project takes place in an orphanage approximately two hours from Cusco and it targets the employees of the orphanage and women from the surrounding communities, Saclo and Huchuy Qosqo.



Methods

1. Oncologists and radiologists were consulted to identify low-cost or free diagnostic tests and cancer treatments.
2. The director of the orphanage was contacted and dates and times were determined for educational presentations on breast cancer-- one with employees of the orphanage and another with the women from the surrounding communities.
3. Orphanage employees were notified of the presentations and invitations were sent to members of the Sacclo and Huchuy Qosco communities.
4. Two presentations were given along with clinical breast exams and a hands-on exercise on how to do a self-breast exam.



Distribution of patients with breast cancer according to clinical stage at the Institute of Neoplastic Diseases in Lima, Peru (n = 9,005; years 1985 to 1997).



Results and Discussion

In total, 27 women attended the presentations on breast cancer and learned how to do self-breast exams. Twenty-three women received clinical breast exams.

The project was successful in raising awareness regarding breast cancer, early detection, self-breast exams, and in providing clinical breast exams. Future projects may focus on gathering accurate data regarding breast cancer incidence and mortality. Furthermore, more work needs to be done regarding providing access to adequate health care and raising awareness regarding common health concerns.



References

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