Abstract

THE SURVIVAL OF PATIENTS WITH CANCER OF THE CERVIX IN NAIROBI, KENYA

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Background: Cervical cancer ranks as the second most frequent cancer among women globally. Most patients present at advanced stages, leading to high mortality rates. Information on the survival of cervical cancer patients in Kenya which is necessary in estimating the burden of the disease and informing policy is lacking.

Objective: To estimate the survival of patients with cancer of the cervix in Nairobi, Kenya

Methods: A descriptive non-intervention study of selected patients with cancer of the cervix was carried out in Nairobi, Kenya. 211 patients with an initial diagnosis of cancer of the cervix between January 2006 and June 2007 were followed up for five years respectively. The Life table was used to estimate the cure fraction. The Kaplan-Meier estimator was used to estimate the survival duration while the Cox regression model was used to identify covariates that significantly affect the survival duration of patients

Results: 108 (51.18%) patients were confirmed dead within that period, 15 (7.11%) were still alive and 88 (41.70%) were lost to follow up. The patients’ median age was 46 years. The probability of surviving beyond five years was estimated at 0.198. The cumulative proportion surviving at the end of the study interval was 0.67 at stage I, 0.36 at stage II, 0.15 at stage III and 0 at stage IV. The age of patients, stage at diagnosis and level of education significantly affects the survival.

Discussion: As is the trend in developing countries most of the patients were diagnosed at advanced stages. Only 15 (7.11) had an initial diagnosis at stage I. In this study survival is poor compared to results from other developing countries such as Uganda. This can be attributed to low levels of awareness, lack of standard treatment for those diagnosed at advanced stages and low levels of education.

Conclusion: High levels of health awareness should be embraced. Early detection of cervical cancer through regular screening and, prompt and comprehensive treatment should be taken up to improve the overall survival of the patients.