

## **“Walking through the storm”: Management of Breast Cancer in the era of Covid-19: An analytical Cross-Sectional Study**

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### **Introduction**

An analytical cross sectional study was done for the breast cancer patients that received the treatment during Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia. The purpose of this study is to analyse the aftermath of pandemic Covid-19 regards to the impact of breast cancer treatment. Initial hypothesis, was to expect a delay in the intervention for breast cancer patient that was diagnosed during MCO period. A total number of patients involved was 148 patients in which 67 patient in year of 2020 and 81 patients in year of 2019.

MCO period was started back on 18th March 2020 until 31st December 2020. This study was carried out in the Northern region of Malaysia, specifically in non-COVID 19 centre, Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim (HSAH), Sungai Petani, Kedah, Malaysia.

### **Methodology/Results**

Randomize selection was done for both samples. 35 patients were selected in random manner to go for further evaluation to identify any variables that lead to delay treatment.

From initial presentation of symptoms till the date to review histopathology examination (HPE) result and establishing diagnosis of breast cancer, it was found that during MCO period, mean time of 7 - 11 days was required for patient in 2020, while for patient in 2019 mean time of 14 – 19 days. While, the mean time for intervention from the day of diagnosis to the surgical intervention for year of 2020 was 7 - 13 and 8-20 days for year of 2019.

Thus, earlier intervention was done for the patients during MCO period compared to previous year prior to the Pandemic Covid-19.

### **Discussion**

Difference in initial and final hypothesis may be attributed due to less patient scheduled for follow up during MCO period, allowing for closer follow up period for urgent cases (e.g. Suspected breast/colon/thyroid cancer) resulting in earlier intervention can be done.

### **Limitations**

- 1) Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Sungai Petani (HSAH) being a non – COVID 19 centre, non-urgent outpatient visits were rescheduled to a later date. Thus allowing for closer follow up for urgent cases.
- 2) Small sample size in HSAH with some patients defaulting treatment

### **Conclusion**

Time taken from initial presentation, diagnosis to definite intervention was not affected by MCO period. However, comparing to similar period of 2019 (March to December), duration from presentation to intervention was 7 – 11 days (2020) as compared to 14 – 19 days (2019). Hence, once the pandemic has been contained and patient load increases in outpatient department, a special dedicated centre to cater the effective and quick treatment for breast malignancy in order to avoid the delay and to improve the overall survival outcome.