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An assessment of prostate cancer knowledge and prophylaxis awareness among men belonging to religious congregations

Malignant neoplasms occur much more frequently in developed than in developing countries. In urbanised and industrialised countries with high national income, malignant neoplasms are the second most frequent cause of death (after cardiac and circulatory system diseases) and constitute 20% of all deaths (2). In Poland, in the year 2000, malignant neoplasms were the cause of 218.8 deaths per 100 thousand inhabitants, including 255.7/100,000 male inhabitants and 183.9/100,000 female inhabitants (4).

Prostate cancer is the most frequent urologic neoplasm in Polish men. Its frequency of occurrence is on the constant increase. Most often, it concerns men after the age of 65, and the highest number of cases is noted in the age group from 70 to 74 years of age. In the male population, prostate cancer-caused deaths rank as the third most frequent among the causes of death from malignant neoplasms, with the mortality ratio of 9.7/100,000 inhabitants (3).

A very important, if not the most basic way of fighting neoplasms is fostering social awareness and providing people with knowledge which will allow to maximally protect the healthy part of the population from cancer (1). While there are numerous scientific publications on neoplasm morbidity, mortality, and treatment, research and printed materials assessing society's knowledge and awareness of neoplasm illnesses are scarce in spite of the importance of prophylaxis for early diagnosis.

The aim of the study was to examine monks' knowledge of prostate cancer and assess their level of awareness of proper prophylactic behaviour which allows an early diagnosis of the disease. To precisely specify the studied issue, detailed aims had been formulated concerning the following areas: 1) the knowledge of neoplasms; 2) the state of knowledge of prostate cancer; 3) assessment of the level of awareness of correct prophylactic behaviour with regard to early diagnosis of prostate cancer.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Subject to research were 80 men belonging to various congregations in the town of Przemyśl and its vicinity. A questionnaire, developed for this paper, was used to obtain the research material. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous and the choice of persons was random. The collected material was analysed descriptively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The studied group of men was diverse as regards age and education. The data are presented in Table 1 and 2. Table 1 shows that the largest number of the examined monks were aged between

31 and 40 (30%). In the examined group, the prevailing majority of respondents had higher (46.25%) and secondary (41.25%) education (Table 2).

Table 1. Age of subjects

Age groups (years of age)	N	%
21–30	20	25
31–40	24	30
41–50	20	25
51–60	8	10
61–75	8	10
Total	80	100

Table 2. Level of education

Education	N	%
Elementary	2	2.5
Vocational	8	10
Secondary	33	41.25
University	37	46.25
Total	80	100

THE MONKS' KNOWLEDGE OF NEOPLASM DISEASES

A great majority of the subjects (86%) correctly stated that neoplasms are non-infectious. Only a few subjects gave a wrong answer (4%), and the rest answered they did not know (10%). The examined group demonstrated considerable knowledge of neoplastic disease risk factors. Among these, the respondents most frequently mentioned cigarette smoking (92%), environmental pollution (75%), cancer in the family (71%), food preservatives (43%), and ionising radiation (41%). Also satisfactory were the respondents' answers to a question concerning the epidemiology of cancer deaths. Nearly one half (49%) of the subjects knew that cancers are the second most frequent cause of death after circulatory system diseases. When asked if early diagnosis was decisive in achieving complete cure of cancer, the prevailing majority agreed with that statement (87%), with the remaining subjects holding a different opinion (13%).

THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE OF PROSTATE CANCER

The analysis of the responses to questions concerning the knowledge of prostate cancer shows that the subjects have quite a good level of familiarity with the problem. Asked about the age group most frequently affected by the disease, more than half of the respondents answered correctly, quoting the age of 65 years (67%); the remaining answers were incorrect (35%). Also, accurate answers were obtained from the monks asked about the symptoms of prostate cancer. The greatest number of respondents mentioned weak urine stream (71%) and frequent night urination (68%). Then, they listed the sense of incomplete emptying of the bladder (63%) and frequent urge to urinate (57%). Few subjects quoted symptoms insignificant for the disease (15%). To assess the subjects' knowledge of prophylactic examination, which is crucial for early diagnosis of prostate cancer, questions were asked about types of examination. This area of knowledge proved more difficult for the respondents as only half of them had heard about PSA blood tests (50%), and only

few knew about rectal examination (25%). The rest of the respondents quoted test types insignificant for prostate cancer prophylaxis (22%). The next question concerned the monks' knowledge of prostate cancer treatment methods. The respondents' answers were accurate and formed the following series: surgery (75%), pharmacological treatment (65%), and radiotherapy (33%). Respondents encountered most difficulties in answering the question concerning prostate cancer mortality rates in Poland. Only few respondents (15%) knew that among neoplastic diseases prostate cancer is the third most frequent cause of death, the rest admitted to a lack of knowledge in that matter (85%).

ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF PROPER PROPHYLACTIC BEHAVIOUR WITH REGARD TO EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF PROSTATE CANCER

During the study of the awareness of early prophylaxis of prostate cancer, the monks were asked about the age at which men should start doing prophylactic examinations. Unfortunately, the knowledge of this was unsatisfactory, as only few subjects knew that examinations should be started at the age of 50 (20%). Others mentioned the age of 60 (30%), and the rest admitted they did not know the correct answer (50%). The respondents were also asked about the frequency of prophylactic examinations. Only half of the respondents correctly replied with "once a year" (50%), others said "once every three years" (18%) and the rest did not give any answer (32%). To learn the opinion of the subjects regarding the value of prophylactic examinations, the monks were asked about their usefulness. Almost half of the respondents judged them as very important (48%), or as necessary (45%), and according to the rest the examinations were useless (7%). The following question concerned the knowledge of increased risk factors of prostate cancer that should convince every man to start doing prophylactic examinations. None of the studied group of monks took into consideration all the important factors. The great majority correctly pointed to cases of prostate cancer in the family (67%), others enumerated: unhygienic way of life and high-fat diet (31%), addictive substances (27%), and only a few included chemical factors to which men are exposed at work (12%).

As stated by the questioned monks, the main source of knowledge they presented in the questionnaire was general press (72%), television (40%), discussions with specialists (18%) and studies of medical publications (10%). The prevailing majority of the subjects would definitely like to broaden their knowledge of the subject (82%) and the rest were indifferent to the matter (18%).

CONCLUSIONS

1. The monks' general knowledge of neoplasms (causes, risk factors, mortality) is satisfactory in most cases.
2. The examined have sizable knowledge of prostate cancer. Most of them are familiar with its symptoms and can accurately quote methods of treatment and age at which men are most frequently affected by the disease.
3. There was observed a low level of knowledge concerning methods of early prostate cancer prophylaxis. The respondents have poor knowledge of types of examination and are unacquainted with high risk factors of that disease.
4. The level of prophylaxis awareness of the monks is unsatisfactory. Only few subjects know when these examinations should be started and how often they should be repeated.
5. Research results show the subjects have low awareness of prostate cancer mortality rates.

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SUMMARY

Prostate cancer is the most common urinary cancer in men in Poland. The frequency of its occurrence is constantly rising and the mortality rate makes it the third most frequent cause of malignant cancer deaths in men. In cancer epidemiology, the awareness of society and early prophylaxis are of great importance. The aim of this work was to assess the knowledge of prostate cancer and the awareness of proper prophylactic behaviour among monks. The research was done in the first half of the year 2004 in male monasteries in the area of Przemyśl and its vicinity. Subject to research were eighty monks. The research proved that their knowledge about prostate cancer is good. Most of them know the symptoms of the illness (70%), and enumerate methods of treatment as well as correctly identify the age at which this disease usually occurs (67%). What is worrying is the low prophylaxis awareness, shown despite the respondents' declarations as to the great importance (48%) and necessity (45%) of doing early prophylactic medical examinations. Only few of them know at what age prophylactic medical examinations should be started (20%), and only half of them are aware of how often they ought to be done (50%). The monks have little knowledge of the kinds of prophylactic medical examinations, disease risk factors, as well as high death rate among men caused by prostate cancer.

Poziom wiedzy na temat raka prostaty i ocena poziomu świadomości z zakresu prawidłowych zachowań profilaktycznych wśród mężczyzn skupionych w zgromadzeniach zakonnych

Rak prostaty jest najczęstszym nowotworem urologicznym wśród mężczyzn w Polsce. Częstość występowania tego nowotworu stale wzrasta, a umieralność z powodu tej choroby zajmuje trzecią lokatę wśród przyczyn zgonów na nowotwory złośliwe w populacji mężczyzn. W epidemiologii nowotworów duże znaczenie odgrywa wiedza społeczeństwa oraz wczesna profilaktyka. Celem pracy było poznanie stanu wiedzy na temat raka prostaty i określenie poziomu świadomości w zakresie prawidłowych zachowań profilaktycznych wśród mężczyzn skupionych w zgromadzeniach zakonnych. Badania przeprowadzono w okresie pierwszego półrocza 2004 r. w męskich zakonach na terenie Przemyśla i okolic. Objęto nimi 80 zakonników. Przeprowadzone badania dowiodły, że zakonnicy posiadają dobry zasób wiedzy na temat raka prostaty. Większość z nich zna objawy tej choroby (70%), potrafią wymienić sposoby leczenia oraz poprawnie określają wiek, w którym to schorzenie najczęściej występuje (67%). Niepokojący jest fakt, że pomimo deklaracji ankietowanych dotyczącej dużej wartości (48%) i konieczności (45%) wykonywania wczesnych badań profilaktycznych zaobserwowano niski poziom świadomości w tym zakresie. Tylko nieliczni odpowiedzieli, od którego roku życia należy rozpocząć badania profilaktyczne (20%), a jak często należy je wykonywać, wiedzieli zaledwie połowa badanych (50%). Mały zasób wiedzy posiadają również zakonnicy na temat rodzajów badań profilaktycznych oraz czynników zwiększających ryzyko zachorowania na raka prostaty. Badaną grupę cechuje także niska świadomość dotycząca wysokiej umieralności mężczyzn z powodu raka prostaty.