

Current Status of Breast Cancer in Korea

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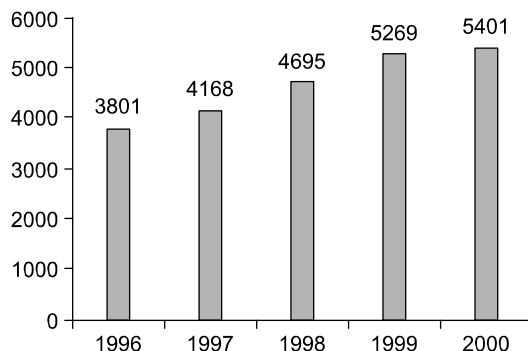
Recently the nation's attention for new therapeutic methods to cure breast cancer is running higher so more people are concerned about detecting any symptom of cancer as early as possible in the midst of a growing number of cancer patients. Breast cancer took 8.7% of woman cancer patients in 1985, and the figure has been climbing steadily to 9.8% in 1987, 11.4% in 1992, 12.5% in 1997 and 15.1% in 2000. Once breast cancer is detected in its earliest stage, it is possible to have surgery that can preserve the breast with minimal damage, which will not only extend life but also help the patient earn a mentally, functionally and esthetically happy life. As far as the characteristics describing the breast cancer incidences reported in Korea, the frequency rate is still lower than those reported in developed countries. By statistics, breast cancer incidence is more or less subject to the standard of living and food habits of each country. The incidence is reportedly more frequent in developed countries, where for instance,

young women in their early 20s taking contraceptive pills with a dose of over 1,500 mg and inappropriate application of the HRT after the menopause are frequently practiced. Whereas under developed countries where the fecundity of women is relatively high and infants rely on their moms' own milking show lower incidence rate of breast cancer, which showcases the reason why low fecundity, low incidence of breast feeding are among the harmful elements leading to the lethal disease. However the improved living styles and the change in the food habit of the nation make the incidence rate even higher so is the situation similar in Japan.

If a woman's mother or one of her siblings got breast cancer, chances are that she would get a similar kind of breast cancer three to four times higher than that of ordinary people. One of the general causes of the breast cancer is known as the default genetics of chromosome in No.17, BRCA 1 mutation, chromosome No.13, BRCA 2 mutation. It is

Breast Cancer Incidence in Korea

1996	16.7	/	100,000	/	year
1998	20.3	/	100,000	/	year
2000	23.0	/	100,000	/	year
			(5410/23,443,227)		
World	29.8	/	100,000	/	year



reported that 70% of women who possess the default No.17 BRCA 1, turn into breast cancer patients by the age of 60 and 63% of them also get ovary cancer by the age of 70, according to a report submitted by Utah University. Breast cancer incidence is more frequent in big women than those who are thin. It is of all-important to be able to self-diagnose breast cancer by checking up the changes in color or a nipple retraction while, for instance, taking a bath. The mammography, xeromammography, fine needle aspiration cytology, biopsy, CT, MRI, Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and T-scan are among the methods that are widely practiced to detect breast cancer. The accuracy rate of mammography has been reported between 85~90% whereas doctors recommend the fine needle aspiration cytology, which is especially effective for pregnant women. The Thermography may not be helpful in diagnosing since a breast cancer ultrasonography just can differentiate the mass whether the cancer is of a cyst or solid type.

For curing breast cancer, it is common to apply a surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy for a partial treatment and chemical, immunization, hormone therapies are useful for the entire body. It is important to consider the after-effect in relation with esthetical, sexual, social, familial problems before a patient take any therapy to cure breast cancer.

For the surgical methods concerning breast cancer, Dr. Halsted had first adopted the 'standard radical mastectomy' in 1894, which onward was widely used until the mid-1970s. The surgical meth-

od completely removes the muscles as well as whole breast tissue, including complete axillary dissection; little is used these days. The 'modified radical mastectomy' was started by Patey in 1948, which preserves the muscles, pectoralis major but leaves the pectoralis minor by Auchincloss' method or also leaves the pectoralis minor by Dr. Handley's. Over 60% of breast cancer operations in the U.S. are conducted by either of the two surgical ways. The partial Mastectomy or quadrantectomy removes one fourth of the breast tissue including complete axillary dissection and this method is applicable to small cancer whose diameter is less than 2.5 cm. The 'Autologous Bone Marrow Transplantation' is applied for recurred or Stage IV cancer patients.

The cause of breast cancer is not yet clearly known but bad food habits (high fat, high calories), abuse of hormone and pollutions are known to be main culprits. For preventive measures it is strongly advised to avoid high fat and protein foods and smoking. It is necessary to have check-ups regularly at least once a month in 3~5 days period, then one third of breast cancer can be prevented so that it can be treated early to cure the cancer. It is also recommended to have a diagnosis of breast cancer at least once a year and young ladies in their 20s are advised to avoid X-Rays since they are a cause for breast cancer. For this reason the fine needle aspiration cytology is recommended. Most of all the positive attitude to live together can be the best remedy to prevent from breast cancer and it is best to let positive attitude lead a happy life.