Early cancer detection training for primary care providers in Malaysia: Experience from the REBUNG cancer care in primary care short course

Suniza Jamaris[1], Christine Shamala Selvaraj[2], Yong Kek Pang3, Chong Guan Ng[4], Hamizah Sa'at[1], Nur Aishah Mohd Taib[1]

[1]Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Malaya, 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, [2]Department of Primary Care Medicine, Universiti Malaya, Faculty of Medicine, 50603, Kuala Lumpur , Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, [3]Department of Medicine, Universiti Malaya, Faculty of Medicine, 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, [4]Department of Psychological Medicine, Universiti Malaya, Faculty of Medicine, 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Track: Medical Professionals
Theme: Screening and Diagnosis

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Malaysian National Cancer Registry has reported an increase in late-stage presentations of most prevalent cancers. One promising strategy to improve timely diagnosis is to train community-based general practitioners (GPs) on how to detect cancers early, as they are closer to the community. A 15-week online training programme for GPs on Malaysia's five most prevalent cancers (breast, colorectal, lung, cervical, and prostate cancers) was developed to improve GPs' knowledge and practise on early cancer screening and diagnosis. Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of the online module on GPs' knowledge and intention to change practice for early cancer screening and diagnosis. **Materials and Methods:** The course was self-paced, with introductory and closing sessions conducted live via the project iECHO® platform. Pre- and post-module surveys assessed participants' knowledge and intended changes in practice. The completion rate was determined by the number who completed all required tasks and questionnaires. The pilot (Jan–Mar 2022) involved 10 participants. With greater stakeholder engagement, enrolment grew in 2023 and 2024. **Results:** Enrolment increased from 97 participants in 2023 to 219 in 2024. Completion rates declined from 71.1% (69/97) to 55.3% (121/219). Among those completing both assessments, knowledge scores improved. In 2023, median scores rose from 8 (range 4–16) to 12 (range 5–16); in 2024, from 7 (range 4–13) to 10 (range 4–16). Across both years, over 90% of respondents indicated an intention to change practice, including adopting psychosocial support and improved patient navigation. **Conclusion:** The course significantly improved knowledge and intent to change practice. However, the drop in completion rates suggests barriers such as scheduling conflicts and competing demands. Efforts to address these barriers, such as offering flexible scheduling options or integrating the course into existing professional development programs, may help increase participation rates and maximise the impact of the training on clinical practice.

Keywords: Early Cancer Detection, online training, primary care, cancer training programme, cancer screening