98 Shades of grey - health literacy and the BIRADS-3 dilemma among Malaysian women

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Track: Determinants of Health
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: BIRADS-3 represents a conundrum. Although the Breast Cancer Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) released by Ministry of Health Malaysia clearly states that women with BIRADS-3 should get a follow-up mammogram after 6 months, this is not always the case. Here, we examined the clinical outcomes of 98 women who reported a BIRADS-3 mammogram during their initial scan as part of a free breast cancer screening program. This was done to understand if these cases were being correctly managed by both healthcare professionals and the patients themselves. **Materials and Methods:** A total of 98 women who reported BIRADS-3 were individually interviewed via telephone regarding their follow-up choice ("Yes, I got a mammogram", "No, I didn't" and "I went for a biopsy instead"). For those who got a mammogram, their follow-up BIRADS score was enquired while for those who did not go for a mammogram, they were asked for their reasons for not doing so. **Results:** Of the 98 women interviewed, only 39 went for a follow-up mammogram while 52 opted not to get another scan. A further 7 got a biopsy instead. Among those who went for a follow-up mammogram, 26 did not know their follow-up score. For those who did not get a follow-up, 11 patients cited doctors' advice that no follow-up was needed, 10 said they had no time for a follow-up and a further 9 cited the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. **Discussion:** These findings highlight a potential lack of health literacy among both patients and clinicians. Patients should be educated on the significance and follow-ups associated with all possible outcomes while being properly navigated through the screening process. For clinicians, they should be properly read in on the latest CPG and to be ready and able to explain to patients the significance of their BIRADS scores and to motivate proper follow-ups.

Keywords: Breast cancer, mammograms, health literacy, malaysia, screening, early detection