

Geographical Distribution and Utilization of Mammography in Thailand

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Abstract

Background: Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among Thai women. Understanding on breast cancer screening programme in order to detect it at an early stage is crucial for the improvement of treatment outcome.

Objective: This study describes resource allocation (in terms of mammograms and human resources) and utilization of mammography for breast cancer screening in Thailand in 2002.

Methods: Data on distribution of mammogram facilities were retrieved from the Department of Medical Science, Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). A self-administered mail questionnaire survey to public and private owners of mammogram facilities was launched to assess the utilization of these mammograms. A brainstorming workshop among experts was conducted to produce standard guidelines for breast cancer screening.

Findings: In 2002, there were 139 facilities for mammograms in 30 out of the total 76 provinces in Thailand. Private providers owned 60%, and public hospitals the remainder. Most mammogram facilities, 50.36%, were concentrated in Bangkok, whereas the lowest 5% were in the north. The allocation indicated an inequitable distribution of mammogram facilities. For instance, for every one million females aged over 35 years, 41.8 mammogram facilities were available in Bangkok, 2.8 in the north and 4.0 in the north-east. The gap in the discrepancy index in Bangkok was 15.1 times in relation to that in the north. The nationwide index was 3.9. One crucial input of the mammography procedure is the number of radiologists. In Thailand, a total 682 radiologists were distributed in 63

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