Abstract

Objective. Characterize diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer in Bogota, Colombia and examine the extent and determinants of patient delay. Material and Methods. Using a census approach we identified 1,106 women with breast cancer. Information was gathered through personal interviews and the review of medical records. Patient delay was defined as the time elapsed from first symptoms to initial consultation. Results. More than 80% of the women (902) consulted due to symptoms; the majority had advanced-stage disease. Patient delay was established in 20.3% and the main related factors were older age, lack of social security and advanced clinical stage. Higher education in patients was associated with reduced delays. Discussion. Women do not recognize breast cancer symptoms. Patient delay and related factors are similar to those found in other studies. There is an urgent need to develop communication and education strategies regarding breast cancer symptoms and early detection.

Keywords

Breast cancer, delay, symptoms, detection, health services, Colombia.