



ABSTRACT

Knowledge, attitudes, and practices toward thyroid disorders among residents of Hebron Governorate

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Background: Thyroid disorders represent one of the most prevalent endocrine disorders in the world. There are over 300 million individuals around the world affected by thyroid disorders. Despite their widespread occurrence, they remain considerably undiagnosed. Thyroid disorders are conditions that results from either over/under secretion of thyroid hormones as well as thyroid enlargement. If left untreated, they may lead to complications that impact the quality of life. There is clear evidence that the awareness of these conditions is remarkably low, which often results in delayed diagnoses and insufficient warnings about the complications of the disorders. In Palestine, there are no studies focused on thyroid dysfunction and its correlation with awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

Aim: This study aims to investigate the general population's level of knowledge regarding thyroid disorders.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was done with 418 participants in Hebron. Data collected included sociodemographic characteristics, knowledge of thyroid disorders (including risk factors, symptoms, and treatments), and attitudes towards prevention. Statistical analysis involved Pearson's Chi-square and multivariate logistic regression aimed at establishing several sociodemographic factors relating to participants' knowledge levels.



Results: The participants demonstrated a moderate degree of understanding of thyroid disorders with an average score of 7.16 out of 14. Women scored higher than men ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, participants in the younger age group of 18-25 years had better knowledge than their counterparts aged 41-55 years ($p < 0.001$). There was also an association with higher education as those who held a bachelor's degree or higher tended to have better knowledge ($p < 0.001$). Knowledge was also predicted by employment status and smoking where employed (non-smoking) participants demonstrated greater knowledge ($p < 0.001$). Knowledge was also better in participants who had a family history of thyroid disease or those who had previously undergone thyroid testing ($p = 0.002$). Gaps in knowledge included understanding the effects of thyroid hormones on cholesterol levels (52.1% correct), the role of the thyroid hormone in child development (66.8% correct), and iodine deficiency (11.99%) and obesity (12.09%). Other gaps included understanding the mild side effects of thyroid treatment where only 45.2% stated there are mild side effects and 67.9% stated that food has no effect on thyroid medication. The multivariate analysis found that medical education (AOR = 0.212, $p < 0.001$), income above 5000 shekels (AOR = 4.774, $p = 0.06$), and belief in prevention (AOR = 0.17, $p = 0.03$) were significant predictors of better knowledge about thyroid disorders.

Conclusion: The investigation shows important omissions within the understanding of thyroid disorders, especially concerning symptom recognition and treatment protocols. Specifically, older adults and those with a lower education level would benefit from targeted awareness and prevention campaigns concerning thyroid disorders in Hebron. They, as well as the general population, need to be educated on the role of medical consultations and preventive medicine in addressing gender-specific health issues. Furthermore, misconceptions about the influence of thyroid hormones need to be corrected.