

ABSTRACT

Myths and common misbeliefs about cervical cancer causation among Palestinian women: a national cross-sectional study

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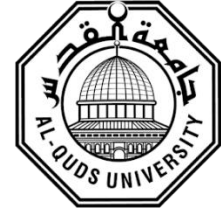
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Background: Cervical cancer (CC) myths and beliefs can negatively impact women's preventive behaviors, including vaccination against human papillomavirus and having regular screening tests. This study aimed to examine the awareness of Palestinian women about myths related to CC causation and investigated factors associated with good awareness.

Methods: A national cross-sectional study was conducted to recruit adult Palestinian women from hospitals, primary healthcare facilities, and public areas in 11 Palestinian governorates. A translated-into-Arabic version of the Cancer Awareness Measure-Mythical Causes Scale was used to collect data. Awareness level was determined based on the number of CC myths around CC causation recognized to be incorrect: poor (0–4), fair (5–9), and good (10–13).

Results: A total of 7058 questionnaires were included. Myths unrelated to food were more commonly recognized as incorrect compared to those related to food. The most recognized food-



unrelated myth was 'having a physical trauma' (n=3714, 52.6%), whereas the least recognized was 'using mobile phones' (n=2238, 31.7%). The most recognized food-related myth was 'drinking from plastic bottles' (n=2708, 38.4%), whereas the least recognized was 'eating food containing additives' (n=1118, 15.8%).

Only 575 participants (8.1%) displayed good awareness and promptly recognized at least 10 out of 13 myths around CC causation as incorrect. Factors associated with a lower likelihood of displaying good awareness of myths around CC causation included living in the West Bank and Jerusalem, being married, widowed, or divorced, knowing someone with cancer, and visiting hospitals or primary healthcare centers.

Conclusions: A very small proportion of Palestinian women recognized 10 or more myths around CC causes as incorrect. Initiatives addressing CC myths are needed in the Palestinian community.