Colorectal cancer in South East Asia – Trends, challenges and treatment

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ABSTRACT
Colorectal Cancer is made up of cancers affecting the colon and rectum. It is now one of the leading causes of cancer mortality in the South East Asia. However over the past decade , there has been an increasing trend of colorectal cancer in younger population below age of 50 years, and in some cases more aggressive disease. In South East Asia , there is still poor uptake by the public to come for early screening especially in rural areas. There is a need to improve public health awareness and also to look out for "red flag" signs -like passing blood in the stools, abnormal bowel movements, weight loss, especially also in the presence of strong family history of colon cancer. In many of the countries , unfortunately,40 to 50% of cases are picked up in more advanced stages like Stage 3 or 4. This reduces the chance of "cure". Public awareness of healthy diet, with lower fat, higher fibre, reduced red meat, and reduced processed food intake need to be inculcated from younger age groups. Awareness of risks of smoking and controlling obesity with diet advice and regular exercise is important and reducing our sedentary life style. There is a need for early access for colonoscopy, so that polyps can be detected and removed and potentially reduce the chance of it turning malignant. Public awareness through the media is a key component.

Keywords: South east asia, colorectal, rising trends, public awareness, early detection