

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF PHYSICIANS AT PRIMARY HEALTH CARE FACILITIES IN ALEXANDRIA REGARDING COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING

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Introduction

Colorectal cancer (CRC) poses a significant public health challenge. In Egypt, there's a concerning upward trend in CRC cases, which could be linked to factors like adopting a more westernized lifestyle and defective delivery of CRC screening. Colorectal polyps are a critical characteristic of most CRC cases. It usually takes at least 10 years for those grossly apparent polyps to proceed to CRC, this period represents a special window of opportunity for screening of CRC. Improving knowledge towards CRC screening among primary healthcare physicians (PHCPs) can lead to higher screening rates enhancing survival rates through early detection and appropriate medical interventions.

Aim of the Work

This study aimed to assess knowledge and practice of PHCPs in Alexandria regarding CRC screening. In addition, the study aimed to assess the capacity of primary health care (PHC) facilities in Alexandria for CRC screening.

Subjects and Methods

A cross sectional study was conducted in PHC facilities of Alexandria city, Egypt. The study included 158 PHCPs and 39 PHC facility managers. Data was collected between December 2022 and June 2023 by using a self-administered structured anonymous questionnaire. A structured interview schedule was also used with the PHC facility managers to assess the capacity of PHC facilities for CRC screening. The study gained approval from Research Ethics Committee of both Alexandria Faculty of Medicine and the Egyptian Ministry of Health and population. Informed consents were obtained from the physicians enrolled in the study. Privacy and confidentiality of the data were ensured.

Results

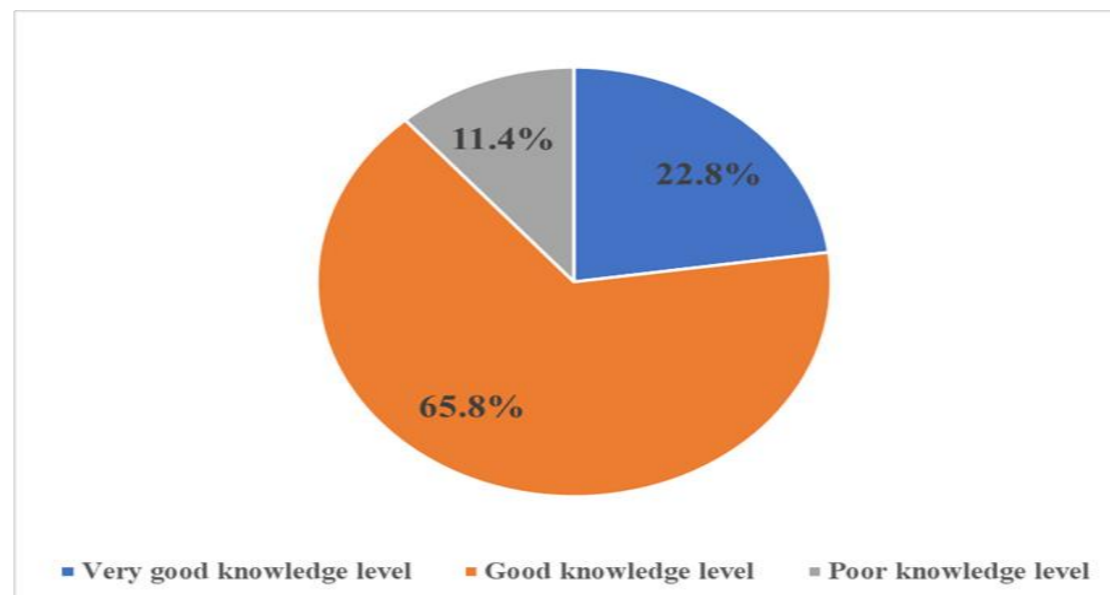


Figure 1 : Distribution of participating PHCPs in Alexandria according to their level of knowledge regarding CRC ,2023.

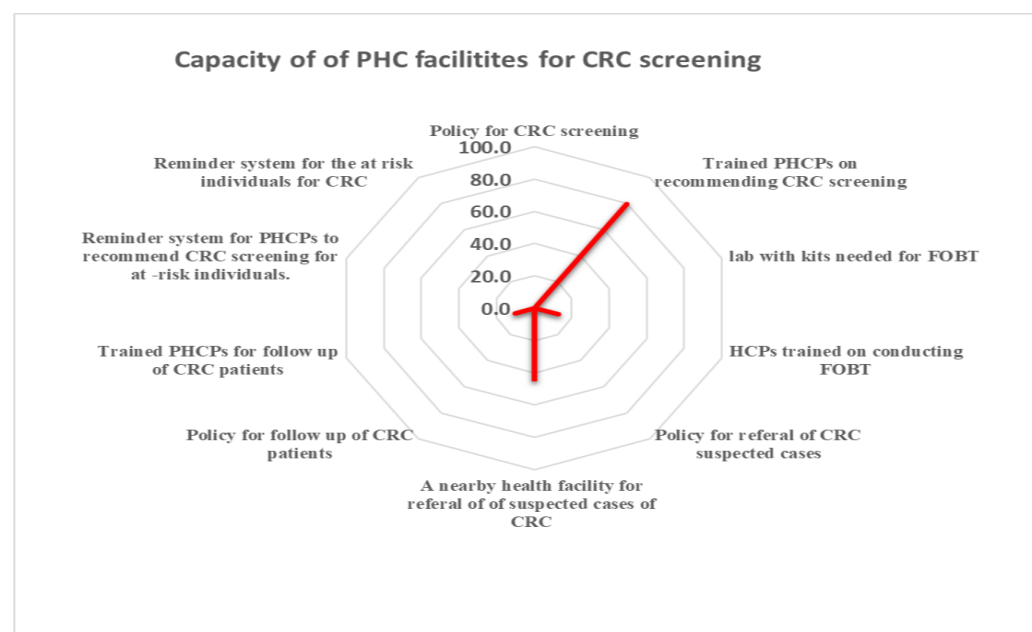


Figure 2: Capacity of PHC facilities in Alexandria for CRC screening,2023.

Table : Multinomial logistic regression analysis for predictors of CRC screening practice among participating PHCPs in Alexandria, 2023.

Independent predictors of CRC screening practice	P value	Odds ratio	95 % Confidence interval	
			Lower limit	Upper limit
Referral of suspected cases of CRC No=0, Yes=1	0.002*	7.324	2.070	25.917
Medical qualification Not internal medicine specialist =0, Internal medicine specialist =1	0.168	1.898	0.763	4.723
Pervious training on CRC screening No=0, Yes=1	0.667	1.332	0.361	4.907
Reviewed literature related to CRC in the past 6 months No=0, Yes=1	0.621	1.726	0.204	2.587
Having relatives diagnosed with CRC No=0, Yes=1	0.109	6.591	0.656	66.181
Knowledge score percent	0.067	1.031	0.763	4.723
Self-efficacy score percent	0.016*	1.048	1.009	1.088

Overall significance of the model: $X^2=55.964$, $p < 0.001^*$, $R^2=0.336$
Reference category is non practicing CRC screening, *: p value significant less than 0.05

Conclusion

The present study highlighted a significant gap in the capacity of PHC facilities in Alexandria for CRC screening. A significant portion of the participating PHCPs of the current study were not practicing CRC screening at all despite their accepted level of knowledge regarding CRC. The findings of the present work can lay the foundation for implementing suitable CRC screening policies in Egypt.