

To: Assignment Editors, Managing Editors and Reporters

(Immediate release)

Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry Report No.14 Press Conference

First 10-year Survival Analysis of Chinese Breast Cancer Patients in Hong Kong

(Hong Kong, 28 September 2022) – The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry (HKBCR), run by the Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF), launched its 14th annual research report at a press conference today. The report was the first ever study to examine the 10-year survival of Chinese breast cancer patients in Hong Kong.

The study revealed that cancer stage, age and biological subtype (cancer subtype) would affect the survival of breast cancer patients. The 10-year overall survival (OS) for stage 0, I, II were over 90%, while that of stage III and IV dropped to 74.0% and 26.4% respectively. The figures highlighted the importance of early detection. It is worthy to note that younger patients, especially for aged 40 or below, have poorer prognosis. These findings would provide doctors with local data to share with their patients and better estimate their medical treatments.

Breast Cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in Hong Kong. On average, 13 women were diagnosed with breast cancer every day in 2019 which was alarming.

Dr. Polly CHEUNG, Founder of the HKBCF said that, according to BCR Report No. 14, of the nearly 20,000 patients (N=19,723) who were diagnosed of breast cancer between 2006 and 2018 and recruited in the HKBCR, various risk factors were consolidated, about 60% of the patients had three or more common risk factors. The top four common risk factors were lack of exercise, no breastfeeding, being overweight/obese and high level of stress. Besides, out of over 18,000 patients, 80% were detected from self-detection by chance; only 11% were found through mammography screening.

Due to COVID-19, the number of breast cancer patients' registration has dropped since 2020, which caused the skew of the public-private distribution of participants. To partial out the impact of COVID-19, the patient characteristics and disease pattern of patients who were diagnosed from 2019 onwards were separately reported in chapter 4.

Between 2019 and 2022, the ratio of patients recruited from public and private sector was 0.3 to 1, while the ratio between 2012 and 2018 was 3.3 to 1. Amidst the pandemic, 25% of the patients were diagnosed with breast cancer through mammography screening (MMG), which was higher than the figure before the pandemic (11%). With a higher proportion of recruitment from private sector, the higher rate of MMG detected cancer is associated with earlier staging.

When diagnosed with breast cancer, survival is a key concern for patients and their family. **Dr. Lawrence LI, Member of Management Committee, HKBCF** said that there were three main factors affecting survival: cancer stage, age and cancer type. HKBCR reported that the most common cancer stage of diagnosis was stage II (35.9%), followed by stage I (31.1%). For cancer subtype, most patients were HR+HER2- (66.5%), while the percentage of patients with HR+HER2+, HR-HER2+, TNBC were between 8.9% and 13.2%

Over 90% survival for early stage while less than 30% for stage IV

Early detection maintains high survival rate. HKBCR Report No.14 included a retrospective study regarding the survival of breast patients. Records on 7,930 Chinese women who were diagnosed with breast cancer between 2006 and 2011 were retrieved, which covered 42.5% of the cases in Hong Kong Cancer Registry of Hospital Authority during the same period of time (18,678 cases). Among them, 62.3% had been followed up for 10 years or more and the median follow-up period was 127 months.

The report showed the overall survival (OS)¹ of breast cancer patients at 10 years was 87.7%. Patients with advanced stage disease showed poorer OS than those with early stage disease ($p < 0.005$). The 10-year OS for stage 0, I, II, III and IV were 97.1%, 94.3%, 90.2%, 74.0% and 26.4% respectively. Comparing with HR+HER2- patients, TNBC patients had lower OS.

More Aggressive Breast Cancer in Younger Women

Younger women may generally not consider themselves to be at risk for breast cancer. However, the study found that young women with breast cancer have relatively low survival rate.

Prof. Winnie YEO, Member of Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry Steering Committee, HKBCF said that “current literatures indicated that younger patients tended to have more aggressive disease, e.g. higher tumour grade. In this study, patients aged below 40 with invasive disease had

¹ Overall Survival refers to the time interval between cancer diagnosis and death from any cause. 整體存活期是指患者確診癌症至因任何原因而死亡之間的時間。

a higher proportion of grade 3 tumours (cancer cells grow or spread more aggressively) than those aged 41-50 (41.8% vs 37.2%).” **Prof. Winne YEO** said the study might help explain the reason of having poorer distant-disease-free survival (DDFS) for younger patients. Moreover, when looking into the cause of death, over 80% patients died of breast cancer for the age group of 50 or below, while the proportion of death of breast cancer for the patients aged 70 or above was 40%.

Dr. Eliza FOK, Chairman of the HKBCF concluded that, “the finding provided valuable insights for the clinical assessment and treatments as well as highlighting the significance of early detection. To engage the local community of fighting against breast cancer together, our Breast Health Centres provide breast health education and breast screening service. For the underprivileged women, subsidized breast screening will be offered. We recommend women aged 40 or above to undergo mammography screening every two years.

Dr. Eliza FOK added that the HKBCF has been actively advocating population-wide breast cancer screening. The launching of a risk-based Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme by The HKSAR government last year was an important milestone in the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. In the future, the HKBCF sincerely wishes that population-wide breast cancer screening will be implemented earliest possible in Hong Kong so as to build a healthier community together.

Please go to this link for the event press release, slides, bulletins and photos:

<https://bit.ly/3Rvu5FD>

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