

20th Annual World Congress on **Pediatrics**
 &
 4th Annual World Congress on
Pediatric Nutrition, Gastroenterology and Child Development
 March 18 - 19, 2019 | Chicago, USA

ACCEPTED ABSTRACTS

PEDIATRICS & THERAPEUTICS 2019, VOLUME 9 | DOI: 10.4172/2161-0665-C1-085

Determinants of delayed diagnosis among pediatric cancer patients at Ayder Comprehensive Specialized Hospital

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Background: Despite advances in the field of pediatric oncology cancer remains a leading cause of death in children. The delays in cancer diagnosis may occur throughout the diagnostic pathway. Diagnosis of childhood cancer as early as possible is crucial to reduce mortality. This study identified determinants of delayed diagnosis among pediatric cancer patients.

Method: A Facility based cross-sectional study was conducted among pediatric cancer patients less than 18 years. Data collection was done by interviewer-administered structured questionnaire from the volunteer primary caregiver

from 1st September, 2017 to 30th August, 2018. The data was checked and cleaned by principal investigator on daily basis during data collection for completeness, consistencies, then coded, entered and analyzed using SPSS version 21 software. Diagnosis delay was considered significant when it is above the 3rd quartile. Binary logistic regression analysis was used to test associations between the determinant factors and the dependent variable. Variables with p-value<0.25 during bivariate analysis were feed to the multivariate logistic regression model. Finally, variables with p-value<0.05 were considered as determinants of delayed diagnosis.

Results: From a total of 102 patients 71(69.6%) of them had delayed diagnosis. Children older than ten years of age were four (AOR=4.01; 95%CI=1.55-12, p<0.001) times more likely to get delayed relative to under five children. Rural residence

(AOR=3.3; 95%CI=1.24-10.24, p<0.001), uneducated parents (AOR= 3.4; 95%CI=1.91-13.25, p=0.009), parents with monthly income less than 1000 ETB (AOR=6.1; 95%CI=1.76-7.23, p<0.001), absence of health insurance (AOR=2.4; 95%CI=1.50-3.50, p=0.02), visit to holy water (AOR=3.4; 95%CI=1.6-7.2) and those who think cancer is incurable (AOR=2.7; 95%CI=1.3-14, p=0.004) were also likely to be delayed.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

Delayed diagnosis of childhood cancer was a major issue and most influenced by the child's age, residency, family's socioeconomic status, parental education, health insurance, visit of holy water and caregivers perception on curability of cancer. Thus, every effort should be made to promote public and parental awareness of childhood cancer and promoting health insurance

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