

# Cancer Awareness: Agents of Change

Effectiveness of Direct Education Programs on  
Cancer Awareness and Prevention in University and  
Primary School Children in Punjab, India

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# Issues

- Punjab was known as the breadbasket of India, but now Bathinda district (the cotton belt of Punjab) has been given the more ominous name of the “cancer belt”. Living in more rural areas, residents do not have access to the education or healthcare needed to combat this disease (Gupta et al. 2009).
- Most villagers come to a tertiary hospital like the Christian Medical College and Hospital when their cancer has progressed to stage III or IV (Thakur et al. 2008). At the advanced stages, treatment becomes more complicated and the cost drastically increases.
- Children and young adults are at an impressionable age and can be “motivated to make appropriate healthy modifications and in turn they can influence the community at large” (Divakaran et al. 2010).

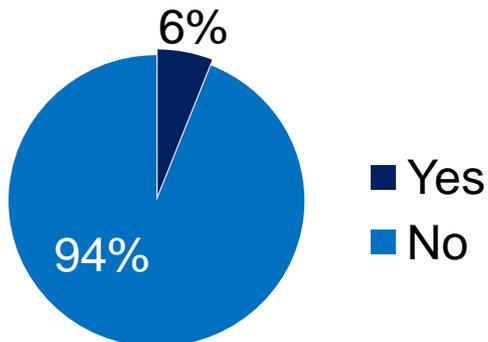
# Methods

- The cancer education sessions were conducted by medical doctors and healthcare workers assigned from the office of the Medical Superintendent and the in-charge of the Rural Health Outreach Program of the Christian Medical College and Hospital (CMCH).
- The nonrandomized research was carried out over a period of two months. At the end of each educational session, pre-coded questionnaires were distributed to 400 students at PAU (200 males and 200 females) and 91 school children from Giana Village asking about their current level of awareness, retained knowledge, and overall appreciation of the sessions.
- Questionnaires were prepared in both English and Punjabi. At the end of the project, the quantitative data was analyzed as to the effectiveness of the whole exercise in increasing the awareness on early detection and prevention, and willingness to participate in screening camps.



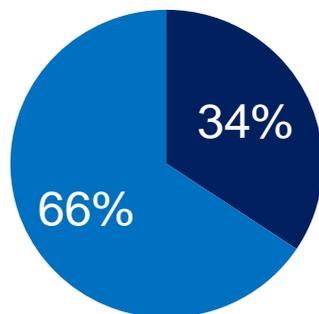
# PAU Students

Have you Ever Been Screened for Cancer?

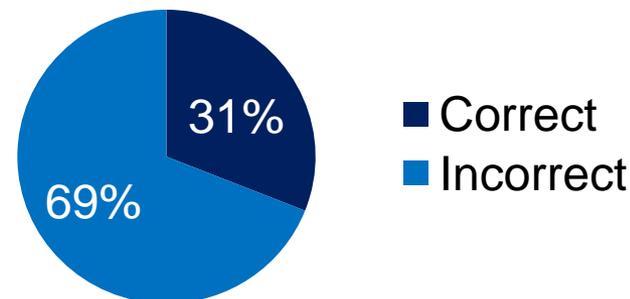


What Percentage of Cancers Is Completely Curable if Detected Early?

Pre

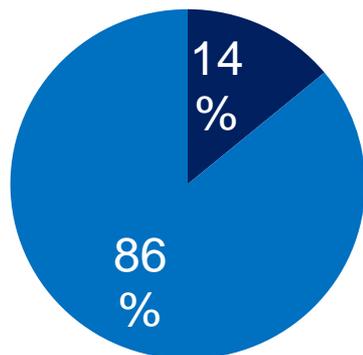


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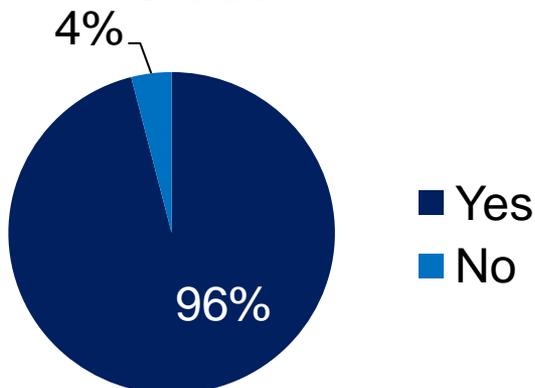


Do you Know How To Perform a Self-Examination?

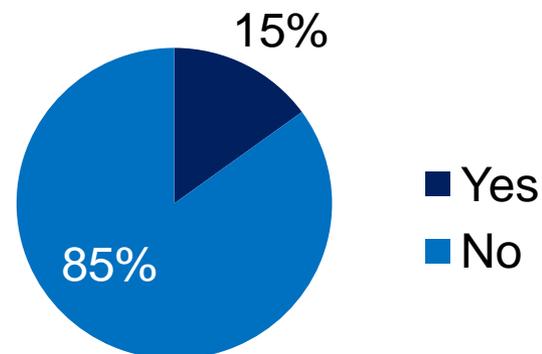
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Do You Have Access to a Trained Physician?

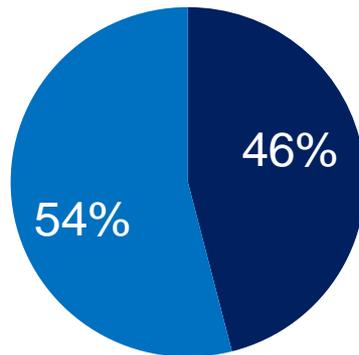




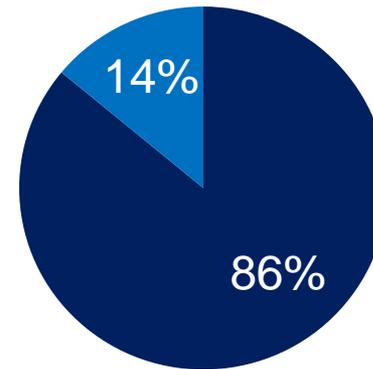
# Giana Village Students

**Do you Know What Cancer Is?**

**Pre**

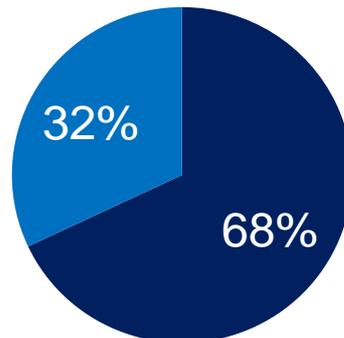


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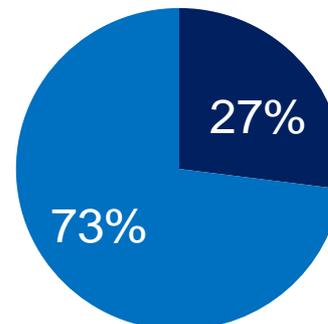


■ Yes  
■ No

**Does the Word "Cancer" Make  
Pre You Feel Afraid?**



**Post**



■ Yes  
■ No

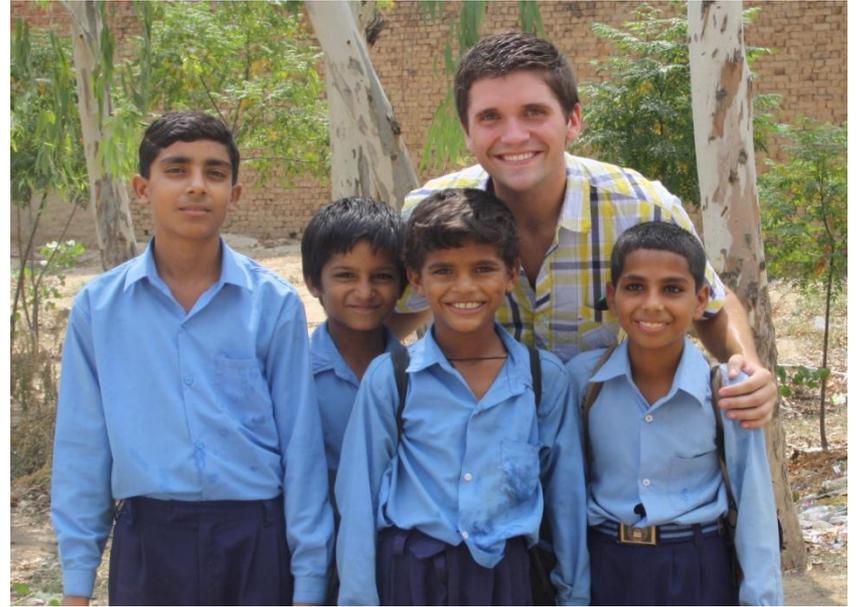
*“I used to be afraid of cancer, but now  
I am not”*

*“I will tell my father not to smoke”*

*“I will share this information with my  
parents”*

# *Discussion*

- These results show us that it is imperative that we teach complicated issues, such as cancer, to younger generations before incorrect notions can be formed.
- When looking at the information based questions, the PAU students did not show a significant increase in retention. The Giana Village students not only showed retention, but also acted as agents of change to inform the rest of their families about cancer.
- There was an 82% increase in knowledge of self examinations amongst the students, which was the main goal of the program. Additionally, we were able to relinquish fears that may have been held by the school children.
- Seeing that 66% of the children receive their medical education from teachers, our future studies will reproduce the education programs specifically for the teachers.



# References

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- Gupta, S.K.; Pal, D.K.; Garg, R.; Tiwari, R.; Shrivastava, A.K.; Bansal, M. 2009. Impact of a health education Intervention program regarding breast self examination by women in a semi-urban area of Madhya Pradesh, India. *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention*. 10: 1113-1117.
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