

An Evaluation of Knowledge, Attitudes And Practices Related To Cervical Cancer Among Female Indoor Patients In Colombo South Teaching Hospital.

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Aims & Objectives: Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women worldwide (WHO, 2018). In Sri Lanka it is the second most common cancer in women (Cancer Registry, 2018). Cervical cancer shows only minor symptoms until it reaches the end stage. However, it can be treated and prevented. In 2017, HPV vaccination was introduced to Sri Lanka's National Immunization schedule. Young females aged 10 years of age are getting two doses of HPV vaccine before reaching 13 years of age. This has brought cervical cancer prevention under spot light. This study aimed to evaluate women's knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding cervical cancer.

Methodology: The descriptive cross sectional study was carried out at the Colombo South Teaching Hospital in 2010. Female indoor patients who were admitted in three wards, aged above 18 years were selected by convenient sampling method. Data was collected using pre-tested interviewer administered questionnaire. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 18.

Results: of the sample (n=225), nearly 50% of the women did not have adequate knowledge regarding the disease. The word "cervical cancer" was not known to 20% of the sample. Out of the respondents less than 40% had adequate knowledge regarding symptoms and risk factors and only 12 % were adequately aware of early detection. Out of the respondents HPV and HPV vaccine was known to only 7% and 2% respectively. Health care professionals catered to only 20% of the sample as source of information.

Although 40% of the sample was aware of Pap testing, 31% has avoided taking the test due to reasons such as not being directed by anyone, fear, shame and over confidence of their own health status.

Only 14% of the women between age 35- 65 have done the Pap test. None of the women participated in the study have had HPV vaccination.

Conclusion: Nearly half of the women (55%) included in this study were in the age group of 35-65 years. This showed the lack of health seeking behaviour among the group of women. However, the Sri Lankan government has introduced the Well Women Clinic concept in 1996 for women for over 35 years. There the women being screened for cervical cancer along with hypertension, diabetes mellitus and breast cancer. Health care professionals should be motivated to educate women regarding cervical cancer which affects reproductive health and encourage promotion of regular pap testing behaviour and HPV vaccination.

A re-evaluation of knowledge, attitudes and practices related to cervical cancer can be recommended to strengthen the government's effort to control cervical cancer related morbidity and mortality among country's female population.

Key words: knowledge on cervical cancer, attitudes, practices, Pap test, HPV vaccination

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