

PP 45

Knowledge on cervical cancer screening methods and risk factors among female undergraduates in University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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Background: Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women in Sri Lanka. The main causative agent is Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Cervical cancer is preventable and detectable early at pre-cancerous stage.

Objective: To assess the knowledge on cervical cancer screening methods and risk factors among female undergraduates in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among randomly selected undergraduates in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura from April 2020 to January 2021. A pretested, self-administered questionnaire was administered with permission from all the faculty Deans. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS version (26.0). Chi-square tests were used to test associations between variables. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Results: A total of 405 students were included. Among them, 65.4% reported that ‘cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers among women’. Of them 46.7% had unsatisfactory knowledge on the cervical cancer. About 80 % of the participants were aware of the Pap smear test as a cervical cancer screening method followed by biopsy (56.3%), and HPV/DNA testing (29.6%). Two hundred and fifty-four participants (62.7%) reported that “having multiple sexual partners” is a risk factor of cervical cancer. Participants had adequate knowledge (67.9%) on the HPV vaccine.

Conclusion: The study revealed that the level of knowledge among participants on cervical cancer is unsatisfactory. Their knowledge on risk factors and Pap smear test was at a satisfactory level. Creating awareness on cervical cancer screening, prevention, and control is essential to prevent them from cervical cancer.