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Knowledge on Cervical Cancer Among Urban Women

Medical Science

KEYWORDS : Cervical Cancer, Human papilloma virus , Pap smear

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ABSTRACT

In India one in every five women suffer from cervical cancer. Hence, the objective of the present study is to analyze the knowledge levels of the women on cervical cancer. The data was collected from 100 women based on random sampling from Tirupati town of Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. More than two fifths (42 percent) of the respondents were not aware about the symptoms of cervical cancer. Two thirds are not aware about the treatment and lack of education is the main reason. 94.0 percent of the respondents had not undergone for screening of cervical cancer, higher cost is the main reason (40.42 percent) . only 31 percent were aware about preventive health practices. Information about preventive practices through mass media need to be increased on cervical cancer to improve knowledge levels .

INTRODUCTION

Cervical cancer is a real problem of public health, as it is the number one "killer" of the female population in less developed countries. Cervical cancer, the third most common cancer among women in the world, was responsible for 275,000 deaths in 2008, 88 per cent of which occurred in developing countries and 159,800 in Asia (GOI, WHO, 2006). Cervical cancer has a major impact on woman's lives worldwide and one in every five women suffering from cervical cancer belongs to India. Thus in India, the onus of preventing cervical cancer is on the women themselves. Therefore, it is the women's knowledge level, motivation for screening and other psychosocial factors that determine her health seeking behavior. It is a prime importance that cervical cancer screening is effective in targeting at-risk populations, and that, once an abnormality has been identified, follow-up screening and treatment are provided with the minimum distress to women. Cervical cancer is preventable disease as long as it is detected early, although it can be a serious illness if it progresses to invasive carcinoma (Sankaranarayanan, 2002). Due to improved technology, treatment of cervical cancer has improved and the survival rate of women with the disease has been greatly enhanced.

Hence, this study was aimed to determine knowledge levels of urban women on cervical cancer symptoms, screening, treatment, and preventive health practices.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected from 100 women based on random sampling from Tirupati town of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of socio demographic profile includes age, educational status, occupation ,reproductive history ,experience of abortions, knowledge about cervical cancer and challenges to access the medical care.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

1. Knowledge on Symptoms of Cervical Cancer & Reasons for not knowing

More than two fifths (42.0 percent) of the respondents were not aware about the symptoms of cervical cancer. Lack of education is the main reason (40.47 percent) for not knowing about the symptoms of cervical cancer followed by one third (33.3 percent) due to negligence, 21.42 percent due to shyness and few (04.47 percent) were unable to notice symptoms which are warned for cervical cancer. The present results corroborated with other studies. The present study's level of knowledge co related to literature (Divakar, H 2012) that revealed urban women did not know much about symptoms of cervical cancer .

TABLE.1 Respondents knowledge on symptoms of cervical cancer

Knowledge	Number of respondents	Percentage
No Yes	42 58	42.0 58.0
Total	100	100
Reasons		
Lack of education Due to negligence Due to shyness Unable to notice warning symptoms	17 14 9 2	40.47 33.33 21.42 04.76
Total	42	100

2. Knowledge & Mode of Treatment

Among the respondents who are aware of cervical cancer, only 36.21 percent of the respondents aware about the treatment and remaining (63.79 percent) not aware. With regard to the mode of treatment, more than two fifths of the respondents (42.85 percent) stated drugs are the main course of action for the cervical cancer and one third as surgery only (33.3 percent).A minor proportion (14.28 percent) of respondents stated both surgery & radiation. And very few stated that Radiation only (9.52 percent) as the mode of treatment.

TABLE 2 : Respondents Knowledge on Mode of Treatment

Knowledge	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes No	21 37	36.21 63.79
Total	58	100
Mode of Treatment		
Drugs Surgery & Radiation Surgery only Radiation only	9 3 7 2	42.85 14.28 33.33 9.52
Total	21	100

3 . Screening of Pap smear & challenges for screening

The most frequently reported obstacles to screening according to Kiriakogianni-Psaropoulou P etal in terms of the causes for not having the screening test, 40% reported negligence, 25% lack of information and 35% reported other reasons as the main causes for not having the test In the present study, a major portion (94 percent) of the respondents had not undergone for screening of cervical cancer. With regard to the reasons,(40.42 percent) did not go for screening due to its higher cost, more than a quarter (27.6 percent) due to fear of limited family sup-

port, one fifths (20.21 percent) do not know where to go and a minor proportion (8.51percent) due to anxiety of results and pain during screening (3.19 percent).

TABLE -3 : Respondents knowledge on Screening & Challenges

	Number of respondents	Percentage
No Yes	94 6	94.0 6.0
Total	100	100
Challenges		
Not known about where to go Painful Anxiety of results Cost Fear of limited family support	19 3 8 38 26	20.21 3.19 8.51 40.42 27.65
Total	94	100

In a study in Singapore few factors were categorized as psychological factors. These include lack of interest, pain, Fear of discomfort and embarrassment were most important barriers for women having an organized screening program (Seow A, et. al., 1995).

4 Awareness of Preventive health practices

Not even one third (31.0 percent) of the respondents were aware about preventive health practices which to lead healthy life. Among them nearly two thirds (61.29 percent) express that early detection is the main preventive practice, followed by prompt treatment(22.58 percent) ,Pap smear,(6.45 percent) and a minor proportion (9.67 percent) stated that all - early detection, pap smear and prompt treatment as best practices.

TABLE 4 : Respondents awareness on cervical cancer prevention

Awareness	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes No	31 69	31.0 69.0
Total	100	100
Preventive Practices		
Pap Smear Early detection Prompt treatment All of the above	2 19 7 3	6.45 61.29 22.58 9.67
Total	31	100

There is compelling evidence that cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable forms of cancer, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively (WHO, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, updating information to women by the health professionals should include the entire age spectrum, as well as women of every socioeconomic status, especially from the weaker economic groups. The screening test can lead to a decrease of the incidence of cervical cancer. However, it is noted that on a national level, organized programs for the massive screening test of the population using the Pap test for the entire population checks varies depending on the country. For example, in England, 83% of the women of age 25-64 years old are checked in recommended interims in comparison to 53-74% of the women in Italy age 25-64 years old. Though exact figures were not available to India definitely it will be very less. Hence, there is a need for the health care providers to associate with the policy makers in our country, make it a priority through health education at all levels and availability of the screening facilities at the door steps of the people living in rural areas. Health education combined with availability of the screening at affordable costs are major concerted and sustained efforts in reducing the scourge of the disease in this part of the world. Cervical cancer screening program such as Pap smear, VIA should be integrated into existing health facilities.

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