

## Knowledge and Preventive Practices of Cancer Cervix Among Women: A Cross Sectional Survey



### Nursing

**KEYWORDS :** Pap smear test; cervical cancer; menstrual hygiene; sexual hygiene

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### ABSTRACT

*A descriptive study was conducted to assess the knowledge and preventive practices of cancer cervix among women residing in a rural Panchayath, Trivandrum. Random sampling technique was adopted to recruit 200 women between thirty to fifty years of age group. The tool used for data collection consisted of socio demographic performa, structured questionnaire and checklist to assess the knowledge and preventive practices respectively. Results showed that majority (73.5 %) of women having poor knowledge regarding cancer cervix. Majority 97.5% of women had never done Pap smear test. The association between knowledge of women with age, education and occupation ( $p < 0.001$ ) and mass media ( $p < 0.01$ ) is statistically significant. The association between menstrual hygiene of women with age, education ( $p < 0.001$ ) and occupation ( $p < 0.01$ ) is statistically significant. The association between sexual hygiene of women with age is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that majority of the women have poor knowledge and improper preventive practices. Majority of the women never underwent Pap smear test due to the lack of knowledge. So it is crucial to be educated the women regarding the prevention and early detection of cervical cancer.*

### Introduction:

Health is our wealth, which can be protected by powerful weapons like knowledge and positive health behavior which can be gained through life experiences, mass media and other educational materials. Women health is a unique especially of health care. Nowadays women have made progress in most of the field but still she tends to be inexplicably neglecting her own health. Most of them have inadequate knowledge regarding early detection and currently available screening method on prevention of cancer. The most common health problem seen among women is cervical cancer. It is the second most common cancer and is the major cause of mortality among Indian women. We know that cervical cancer to be considered to be preventable and curable disease, because it can be diagnosed in its pre - cancerous phase and can be controlled.

Pap smear helps to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer significantly. Inadequate knowledge is the reason for many patients who do not make use of currently available screening method. Cervical cancer creates long term problems for families and challenge for health care systems. Cervical cancer is a disease in which cancer cells are found in the tissues of cervix. It usually grows slowly over a period of time. Before cancer cells are found on the cervix, the tissues of the cervix go through changes in which abnormal cells begin to appear (a condition called dysplasia). Later, cancer starts to grow and spread more deeply into the cervix and to surrounding areas.

Cervical cancer is the second most frequent cancer in women in the world and the third greatest cause of death from cancer in women. Many more women die of cervical cancer in the developing countries. More than 2, 70 000 deaths from cervical cancer every year and 85% occur in developing countries. Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women, with an estimated 5, 30 000 new cases every year (WHO). Sexually transmitted human papilloma virus (HPV) infection is the most important risk factor for cervical intraepithelial neoplasia and invasive cervical cancer. The worldwide incidence of cervical cancer is approximately 510,000 new cases annually, with approximately 288,000 deaths worldwide. Unlike many other cancers, cervical cancer occurs early and strikes at the productive period of a woman's life. The incidence rises in 30 - 34 years of age and peaks at 55 - 65 years, with a median age of 38 years (age 21 - 67 years). Estimates suggest that more than eighty per centages of the sexually active women acquire genital HPV by fifty years of age. Hence, the advent of a vaccine against HPV has

stirred much excitement as well as debate.

India represents 26.4 per cent of all women dying of cervical cancer globally, with China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia and Thailand also showing high death incidence, says the "Cervical Cancer Global Crisis Card" released by the Cervical Cancer-Free Coalition. According to the report card, cervical cancer kills an estimated 275,000 women every year and 500,000 new cases reported worldwide. This entirely preventable disease is the second largest cancer killer of women in low and middle-income countries, with most women dying in the prime of life. According to the Crisis Card, Australia has the lowest cervical cancer mortality rate, which is due to the successful rollout of a comprehensive package of HPV vaccines, treatment and prevention. Recent data released by India's Health Ministry based on the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP) report in 2009 the number of cervical cancer cases were 101938 which has increased to 107690 in 2012.

In Uttar Pradesh a total of 17,367 cases were reported in 2009 and it increased to 18692 in 2012. After Uttar Pradesh the number of cases of cervical cancer in 2012 which has shown an increasing trend are Maharashtra (9892), Bihar (9824), West Bengal (8396), Andhra Pradesh (7907), Tamil Nadu (7077) and others. In the hospital based cancer registries (HBCRs), cancer of the cervix is the leading site of cancer in Bangalore and Chennai, the second leading site in Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram and the third leading site in Dibrugarh. This site of cancer constitutes between 11.4 (Thiruvananthapuram) to 30.7 per cent (Chennai) of all cancers in women in these five HBCRs. The rise in the occurrence of cancer was at the later age in Thiruvananthapuram as compared to the other four HBCRs.

Montgomery K et al (2010) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional study to assess the knowledge, health beliefs, and preventative practices on cervical cancer in older women. A convenience sample of 149 women age group between forty to seventy years was included in this study. Study findings showed that there is a need for HPV and cervical cancer awareness and education for women older than forty years. Women's health care professionals are well positioned to act as a catalyst to improve knowledge, health beliefs, and preventative practice on cervical cancer to ensure optimum health promotion for all women.

The investigator met the cervical cancer clients during the clinical posting. After collecting history, investigator came to know

that the clients who were affected by cervical cancer didn't have any awareness regarding screening test. In developing countries like India, most of the women are affected by cervical cancer because of unawareness regarding Pap smear. Hence the investigator felt the need to prepare educational module to enhance the knowledge of women on cervical cancer.

#### Materials & methods:

The study was conducted at Alanthara village of Nellanadu panchayath, Venjaramoodu. Alanthara village consist of total 660 female population of age group between twenty to sixty years. Among this 290 women belonged to the age group of thirty to sixty years. This rural area was selected for the study due to ample number of availability of samples coupled with the investigator's familiarity and access to the area. In the present study sample comprises of 200 women recruited using simple random sampling lottery method. Sample size was estimated with prevalence from previous similar study with knowledge is 48.8%.<sup>15</sup> According to the calculation; total 200 subjects were included for the study. The tool consisted of three main sections under which knowledge and preventive practices were assessed; a socio demographic data Performa, structured knowledge questionnaire and a Preventive practice check list. The data were collected from Alanthara village of Nellanadu panchayath after getting administrative permission from institutional ethical committee and from panchayath authority. Data collection period was from 6 - 12 - 2013 to 12 - 1 - 2014. During the time of data collection, the investigator met the subjects personally and the data was collected by using interview method after obtaining informed consent. After collecting the data, the correct responses were discussed and doubts were clarified. After that, health educational manual was distributed to the women who would help them to improve their knowledge and preventive practices regarding cervical cancer. The health educational manual consist of carcinoma cervix and its preventive practices including meaning of cancer and carcinoma cervix, its etiology, risk factors, early and late signs and symptoms, diagnostic procedures, pap smear screening methods and various preventive practices and early detection of disease by screening method.

#### Results:

##### a. Socio demographic data of subjects

Majority of subjects (31%) belonged to the age group 30-35years, basic qualification was SSLC (64%) and (59%) were unemployed, (64%) had monthly income of rupees 1000-2000/-. Majority of subjects use Television, newspaper as for information.

##### b. Knowledge regarding cervical cancer among women

**Table 1: Percentage and frequency distribution of subjects according to level of knowledge**

(n=200)

Knowledge score	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Poor	147	73.50
Average	48	24.00
Good	5	2.50

##### c. Preventive practices of cervical cancer among subjects

**Table 2: Percentage and frequency distribution of subjects according to preventive practices**

(n=200)

Preventive practices	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
Vaccine	0	0	200	100%
Smoking	0	0	200	100%
Sexual hygiene	185	92.50%	15	7.5%
Menstrual hygiene	138	69%	62	31%
Pap smear	05	2.50%	195	97.5%
Sex during menstruation	22	11%	178	89%

#### Discussion:

The present study reported that 73.5 % of subjects had poor knowledge, 24 % of subjects had average knowledge and only 2.5 % of subjects had good knowledge of cancer cervix. The findings of the present study were consistent with the results of a previous study which was done by Aswathy S (2012) to assess the current knowledge and practice among women in a rural population of Kerala. Study result showed that 92.8% had poor knowledge on the various aspects of cervical cancer, majority of respondents (89.2%) did not know any risk factor for cervical cancer and only 48.8% of the women were aware of symptoms of cervical cancer.

The present study findings shows that 92.5% women followed sexual hygienic practice and 7.5% didn't followed the sexual hygiene, 69% of women followed menstrual hygiene and 31% couldn't follow proper menstrual hygiene, 97.5% of women had never done Pap smear test in their life and only 2.5% women undergone Pap smear test, eleven percentage of women engaged sexual contact during their menstrual period and 89% of women not engaged sexual contact during menstruation. None of them have taken preventive vaccine and the entire participant doesn't have smoking habit. The findings of the present study were found to be consistent with another study which was done by Yogesh SK et al (2011) on level of cancer awareness among women of low socioeconomic status in Mumbai slums. The study was found that only 6.6% had undergone prior screening.

The study findings point towards the fact that women had deficient knowledge regarding many aspects of cervical cancer. So there is increased need of effective health education program and hence the investigator prepared educational module to enhance the knowledge of women about cervical cancer and its early detection and screening by Pap test.

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