

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Cervical Cancer and Early Detection

Cervical cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in Africa.

In Malawi, very few women undergo screening and the incidence of cervical cancer is on the increase.

Of the 20 countries globally with the highest incidence of cervical cancer, 16 are African nations. That's according to the 2014 Africa Cervical Cancer Multi Indicator Incidence and Mortality scorecard.

It is estimated that more than 70,000 cases occur annually in the sub-Saharan region -- accounting for a quarter of all cancer among women.

Even though cervical cancer is the most common cancer among women, it is preventable and curable when it is detected early.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To encourage listeners about the benefits of cervical cancer screening
- To help create a positive attitude towards abstinence having only one sexual partner among young people
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about Cervical cancer

The Problem: Cervical Cancer and Screening

In a media statement made available to media houses in September 2013, the Malawi Ministry of Health stated that over 2,600 women in Malawi develop cervical cancer and over 1,600 die from it.

The statement added that if nothing is done to alert women about early detection, the number of cervical cancer cases and deaths will increase by over 60 percent to 3,800 cases with approximately 2,600 deaths per year by 2025

It was also established that in Malawi very few women have undergone cervical cancer

screening.

In a random non-scientific survey carried out in the city of Blantyre, out of the 10 women interviewed, only one had ever gone for cervical cancer screening.

The nine women cited various reasons for not going for a screening.

Five of the women said they are just too afraid to go, two said they don't know the benefits of the screening and the other two said they have never thought about having the screening.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand the importance of women seeking screening for cervical cancer and help them understand some of the causes of the disease.

Make the following points;

Cervical cancer is caused by different sub-types of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which is a sexually transmitted virus.

Having many sexual partners and engaging in early sexual contact are some of the factors that can put one at risk of getting cervical cancer. Therefore, it is important for young people to abstain from sex or if they are sexually active, they need to have only one sexual partner and use a condom.

A woman's risk of cervical cancer can be reduced by getting regular cervical cancer screening tests. If abnormal cervical cell changes are found early, cancer can be prevented by removing or killing the changed

cells before they become cancer cells.

Another way a woman can reduce her risk of cervical cancer is by getting an HPV vaccine before becoming sexually active. In Malawi, the vaccine was introduced in 2013 on a pilot phase in the districts of Rumphi and Zomba, and there were expectations of having the vaccine country-wide by 2015. Bear in mind, women who get the vaccine still need regular cervical cancer screening tests. Vaccines reduce a person's risk of getting an infection, but do not prevent such infections in every vaccinated person.

Do a voxpop with women and girls in your area to find out how many have gone for cervical cancer screening.

Have an interview with a nurse from your area to talk about the process of screening and the benefits of having regular cervical cancer screenings.

Useful Contacts

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- [http://www.afri-dev.info/sites/default/files/2014 Africa cervical cancer incidence %26 mortality multi indicator scorecard –Fn.pdf](http://www.afri-dev.info/sites/default/files/2014%20Africa%20cervical%20cancer%20incidence%20mortality%20multi%20indicator%20scorecard-Fn.pdf)



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