

Awareness of cervical cancer in reproductive-age group women in rural village, Afzalpur, NCR; and extending cervical cancer education activities in that area

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Intro Cervical cancer is the third largest cause of the cancer deaths in India. It has an incidence of 30.7 per 100,000 women (highest relative to that of all other types of cancer). The prevalence and burden of cervical cancer is much higher among rural women mainly due to the lack of access to screening and health services, and lack of awareness of the risk factors of cervical cancer. HPV infection and precancerous lesions go unnoticed and develop into full blown cancer before women realise they need to go for medical help.

Methods & material

In a cross-sectional household study in Afzalpur village, a sample of 490 women of reproductive age group were interviewed using a structured questionnaire to assess their knowledge of Cervical cancer. Basic data regarding awareness, risk factors, screening techniques and preventive measures were included in the questionnaire. The data has been analyzed using SPSS – 20 software Simultaneously women were told about the effectiveness of preventive strategies, benefits to the entire family and were motivated to get screened for the cervical cancer.

Results

A total of 490 females of the age group 20-45 years were interviewed. Of them, only 19% reported that they “had ever heard about cervical cancer”. Of those who had heard of ca cervix, only 9% considered foul smelling discharge, post coital bleeding & irregular vaginal bleeding could be symptoms of Carcinoma Cervix. Though 3% thought smoking, alcohol & STDs including HIV could be associated with cervical cancer, other risk factors like ‘sexual intercourse before 18yrs of age’, ‘having multiple sex partners’, ‘multiple parity’, ‘poor personal hygiene’, ‘first delivery before 20 yrs of age’ were recognised by only 1.4%, 0.8%, 1.6%, 2.4% and 1% respectively. The term ‘Pap test’ & ‘HPV’ had been heard by 0.40% and 0% of the women respectively. Only 0.20% of the women interviewed were aware of vaccines available against cervical cancer.

Conclusion

Terra incognita of cervical cancer must be explored thoroughly with its centre to be the rural population. It is imperative that women gather adequate knowledge on the disease for its effective control. This emphasizes the need for increasing awareness in the form of mass campaigns.

Keywords: rural awareness, risk factors, cervical cancer, prevention.