Preventing Cervical Cancer: Increasing Women’s Participation in Cervical Screening
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Session overview

- Cervical screening participation data
- Review of barriers to screening and their impact on practice
- Strategies to remove barriers and increase participation
- Overview of the WA Cervical Cancer Prevention Program (WACCPP)
Cervical cancer: Western Australian data

- Cervical cancer is a preventable and curable cancer if detected early.

- Research suggests that up to 90% of the most common form of cervical cancer, squamous cell carcinoma, can be prevented if women have regular Pap smears every two years.

- 3 out of 4 women who develop cervical cancer have either never screened or have not had a Pap smear in the past 5 years.

- In 2010 there were:
  - 90 new cases of cervical cancer
  - 34 deaths from cervical cancer
WA cervical screening participation rates

Two-year, three-year and five-year participation, WA women aged 20-69 years, 2010-2011, 2009-2011 and 2007-2011


Delivering a Healthy WA
General practice & cervical screening

- General Practice has been recognised as a major focal point of screening service in Australia
- 80% of Pap smears are performed by GPs
- In the context of cervical screening, the GP can identify women who are unscreened or underscreened and encourage them to participate in cervical screening

“The opportunity to introduce appropriate preventive action to 80 million health consultations a year is too good to waste” Ellis and Leeder, 2002
Barriers to cervical screening

System
Accessiblility of services (includes location, timing & confidentiality concerns), costs to the client of screening tests, inadequate or lacking reminder systems

Woman
Sexual abuse or assault - past or present, unaware of need to screen, not a high priority, fear (procedure & results), prior negative Pap experience, time constraints

Provider
Time constraints, embarrassment, uncertain if woman is due to be screened, perceived lack of financial incentive, lack of confidence in smear taking, communication concerns if woman is non-English speaking
Removing the barriers for women and providers

- Offer a Pap smear and explain why it is important
- Explain the procedure and results
- Contact the WA Cervical Cytology Registry for result history
- If the woman declines or is reluctant: ask why
- Offer bulk billing
- Participation in Practice Incentive Program initiatives
- Offer an alternate provider i.e. female colleague, nurse Pap smear provider
- Use an interpreter, have diagrams to help ensure understanding of procedure
- Be sensitive to issues of sexual abuse or assault
Delay or failure to diagnose cancer is a major cause of medical law suits

For a medical negligence law suit to succeed it must be proven that:

- A duty of care was owed and what the standard of that duty was
- The care offered was less than a reasonable standard for the duty of care
- The disease or illness experienced was a direct consequence of that failure of the duty of care. Kearney, MA (1996)
Ensuring best practice

- Educate women about recommended screening policy, benefits and limitations of Pap smears
- Ensure good Pap smear technique and quality of smear taking
- Follow NHMRC guidelines for screen detected abnormalities
- Investigate and/or refer symptomatic women
- Establish clinic standards for:
  - Patient notification of test results
  - Follow-up of abnormal results
  - Recall and reminders
- Inform women of the role of the Cervical Cytology (Pap Smear) Register and promote its role as a ‘safety net’
Key strategies

Actions to increase participation in cervical screening for your clinical setting:

- Individual invitations (‘call’ and ‘recall’)
- Improving opportunistic screening
- Provision of acceptable and accessible screening services

“I don’t have time for a Pap smear right now, I’m too busy”

It is easy for women to overlook their health. A Pap smear only takes a few minutes and is the best protection against cervical cancer.
Individual invitations (‘call’ and ‘recall’)

Approximately 30% of women say that “forgetting” is one of the main reasons they do not keep up to date with regular smears

- Recall and reminder systems can be used to encourage women’s participation in cervical screening and increase participation rates of eligible women (women with an intact cervix)

- Reminder, call and recall systems set up by individual GPs have been successful in increasing cervical screening participation rates

- Reminder systems should not rely on the Cervical Cytology Registry to remind women when they are due for a Pap smear, but are to use the Registry as a ‘safety net’ (i.e. notification to women who are overdue for screening)

- Personal invitations by GPs to screen is an identified motivator for women
Improving opportunistic screening

Recommended steps:

- Identify women due for screening: encourage eligible patients to begin screening and have a Pap smear now
- Check what the woman understands
- Offer a Pap smear during the consultation or offer to make another appointment
- Offer written information or recommend a website
Provision of acceptable and accessible screening services

**Recommended steps:**

- Variety of locations
- Variety of clinic appointment times
- Access to female provider/nurse Pap smear provider
- Culturally appropriate care delivery
- Offer bulk billing of Pap smears

Women with disabilities need Pap smears too!
WA Cervical Cancer Prevention Program (WACCPP)

Cervical Cytology Registry (CCR)
- Manages the Cervical Cytology Registry which acts as a ‘safety net’ for women when they are overdue for their next cervical test. The Register data also facilitates program planning, monitoring and evaluation and is used in approved research.

Clinical Support
- Supports health care providers to increase women’s participation and increase access to alternative providers. Also assists in laboratory quality assurance and the follow-up of women with abnormal Pap smears.

Health Promotion and Education
- Increases awareness of the importance of having regular Pap smears and implements strategies to improve screening participation among WA women, particularly those who are unscreened or underscreened.

Delivering a Healthy WA
What can the WACCPP offer you?

- Provide reminder and follow-up letters to women and their practitioners when cervical screening tests are overdue
- Provide epidemiological and statistical profiles e.g. population based screening rates
- Provide health promotion resources for clinics and for Pap smear events
- Provide clinical support, including answering patient care related and health professional enquiries
- Provide patient cervical screening histories - a linked record of all WA test results belonging to an individual patient
- Support for GPs involved in the Practice Incentive Program
- Support for WA nurse Pap smear providers
Clinical support for nurse Pap smear providers

Role of Clinical Nurse Consultant includes:

- Further develop and deliver a sustainable Nurse Pap Smear Provider Initiative in WA
- Provide clinical professional development and support to credentialed nurse Pap smear providers and other health professionals
- Support clinical quality assurance and best practice for nurse Pap smear providers in WA
- Enhance women’s access to screening services through a number of strategies, including general practice based initiatives
- Promote inter-professional collaboration to improve women’s access to and experience of cervical screening
Key messages

- GPs and practice nurses are pivotal in cervical cancer prevention
- Use every opportunity to offer ALL eligible women Pap smears
- Identify barriers for women within your practice and strive to remove them

Remember: 
What you say
How you say it
What you do...
Is important!
Contact us

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