



Cervical Cancer Screening and HPV Vaccination Knowledge among Healthcare Workers: Insights from the SGH Experience

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BACKGROUND

Cervical cancer is known to be one of the preventable malignancies, with regular screening for pre-cancerous cells, treatment and vaccination being effective measures.¹ According to the findings of the 2019 population health survey, although 88.5% of surveyed women were aware of the purpose of pap smears, only 48.2% had undergone the procedure within the preceding 3 years.²

Facilitators to cervical cancer screening and vaccination include recommendation from healthcare workers.

The aim of the study is to assess the knowledge and attitudes of healthcare workers regarding cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination, recognizing the importance of addressing knowledge gaps and providing awareness to the healthcare professionals at SGH.

METHODS

Type of study: Cross-sectional survey

Study centre: Single centre, Singapore General Hospital

Study Period: September 2023 to Dec 2023

The study comprises of 150 healthcare workers. Participants completed a structured questionnaire covering demographic information, awareness of cervical cancer and HPV, history of pap smears and HPV vaccination status. The study was distributed electronically and responses were collected anonymously.

RESULTS

QN: On Cervical Cancer Screening Knowledge

	Correct	Incorrect
Cervical cancer can be prevented by regular PAP smear / HPV screening	94.51%	5.49%
Pap smear performed every 3 years	53.85%	46.15%
HPV test performed every 5 years	49.45%	50.55%
Cervical cancer caused by certain strains of HPV	93.41%	6.59%
HPV infection is transmitted sexually	96.7%	3.3%
Smoking does not increase the risk of cervical cancer	63.74%	36.26%

QN: When was your last Pap smear/HPV?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Never	36.26%
Pap smear within 3 years / HPV test within 5 years	42.86%
Pap smear more than 3 years / HPV test more than 5 years	16.48%
NA	4.40%

QN: On Attitudes

	Yes	No	NA
Have you had a pap smear / HPV test	54.48%	30.66%	14.86%
Have you heard of HPV vaccination	91.21%	8.71%	

QN: Would you consider taking the HPV vaccine?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	41.76%
No, Because of Cost	12.09%
No, Because I don't know enough about the vaccine	12.09%
No, Because concerns regarding the safety and side effects of the vaccine	7.69%
No, I have no risk factors for HPV infection	4.40%
No, I am out of age range	24.18%
No, I have taken the HPV vaccine previously	9.89%
No, but I would encourage my family members to go for it	6.59%
Other (please specify)	2.20%

CONCLUSION

Implications:

There is a discernible knowledge gap among healthcare workers regarding knowledge and testing on cervical cancer screening and vaccination. This knowledge gap, coupled with varying attitudes can further complicate efforts to promote these measures. Addressing both the knowledge gap and divergent attitudes among HCWs is crucial for fostering trust and promoting acceptance of cervical cancer prevention initiatives. Expanding healthcare workers' understanding of screening protocols and addressing any underlying reservations or misconceptions they may hold are essential steps towards ensuring comprehensive support for these vital public health interventions.

Recommendations:

- Develop targeted educational campaigns to address knowledge gaps and provide comprehensive information about the cervical cancer screening and vaccination.
- Address safety concerns through transparent communication about the vaccine's safety profile.
- Explore cost-effective strategies or financial assistance programs to alleviate the financial burden associated with HPV vaccination.

Healthcare workers play a crucial role as advocates for cervical cancer screening due to their expertise, trusted relationship with patients, ability to provide personalized care, ensure continuity of care, and offer resources for support. Their guidance and encouragement can significantly increase the likelihood of patients undergoing regular screenings, ultimately leading to early detection, timely treatment, and improved outcomes in the fight against cervical cancer.

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