

ABSTRACT

Cervical Cancer is the most common cancer among women in developing countries and the second most common worldwide. Screening with cervical smear plus adequate follow up therapy can achieve a major reduction in both incidence and mortality. Cervical cancer is slow growing and almost 100 percent curable.

Objective to determine the knowledge, attitudes and practices of women age 25 - 54 years in Hanover with regards to cancer of the cervix and the importance of cancer screening.

Method

This is a descriptive study to clarify the knowledge of cancer of the cervix and Pap smear as a method of screening for this disease. The data will be used for health promotion/health education. Four health centres were randomly selected. Systematic sampling was done using the patient's register to select two hundred women who were interviewed.

Results

Data analysis is presented for 150 women. Mean age of the women was 34.0 ± 6.9 years. Most of the women were single 44.7% followed by married 29.3% and 22.7% who lived in common-law union. Most women attended secondary school (46.0%), 46.0% were employed.

Mean gravidity (pregnancy) was 3.66 ± 2.14 , 54.7% reported that they had children from previous relationships. The average reported age of first sexual exposure was 16.6 ± 2.5 , 9.3% had sexually transmitted diseases. In describing cancer of the cervix 61.0% stated that it was cancer of the mouth of the womb, 29.3% said it was cancer of the womb and 9.8% said it was infection of the womb. Knowledge of risk factors for cancer of the cervix included early sexual activity 76.7%, multiple partners 60.7% cigarette smoking 37.3%, sexual transmitted diseases 28.0%, family history 2.0%. 80% of the clients knew what a pap smear is and 77.9% did Pap smears. 46.0% had Pap smear 2 years or less and 5+ years 31.0%. 68.4% were done at the health centres. 71.3% received results. 22.7% feared Pap smear, with the main reason due to pain of the procedure 53.8%.

CONCLUSION

It was observed in the study that most of the women were indulging in behaviour that put them at high risk for cancer of the cervix yet many of them were not aware that they were at risk. Some were afraid of the Pap smear, which would allow them early detection and treatment of cervical cancer.

Therefore health education will have to be done to motivate them to participate in the screening.