

# PREGNANT WOMEN'S LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF CERVICAL CANCER IN A MATERNITY HOSPITAL

\*Analyn B. Santos

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**Corresponding Author:** Analyn B. Santos; Email: absantos1203@gmail.com; doi:10.46360/globus.met.320221008

## Abstract

**Background:** Approximately 90% of deaths from cervical cancer occurred in low and middle-income countries. The high mortality rate from cervical cancer globally could be reduced through a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, early diagnosis, and effective screening and treatment programs.

**Purpose:** The study determined and assessed the level of awareness of the mothers on the risk factors, signs and symptoms, and preventive measures of cervical cancer.

**Methods:** A total of 100 mothers who have consulted with Obstetrical-Gynecologist serviced in a maternity hospital. The study utilized descriptive-correlational method to describe relationship between variables. Online survey forms were distributed, and data were retrieved and analyzed.

**Results:** Majority of respondents were aware of the precautions, the possible signs and symptoms and the risk factors.

**Conclusion:** These COVID 19 pandemic deals with unpredictable staffing schedule, also experience performing painful procedures, having work even breaks and not enough time to complete the performance of nursing tasks.

**Keywords:** Cervical Cancer, Precautions, Risk, Signs and Symptoms.

## Background

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer in women with an estimated 570,000 new cases in 2018 representing 6.6% of all female cancers. Approximately 90% of deaths from cervical cancer occurred in low and middle-income countries. The high mortality rate from cervical cancer globally could be reduced through a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, early diagnosis, and effective screening and treatment programs. There are currently vaccines that protect against common cancer-causing types of human papilloma virus and can significantly reduce the risk of cervical cancer. (WHO 2018)

Studies in the low and middle-income countries have shown that poor recognition of symptoms of cervical cancer is associated with attribution of symptoms to other mundane bodily changes or sexually transmitted infections and subsequently delay in health-seeking and advanced stage cancers at diagnoses (Mishra, 2015) [3]. There are limited studies on cancer symptoms awareness and cancers generally among the refugee population especially in Africa (Stanley, 2021 [4]). A recent review showed that in the whole of Africa, there were only two studies on cancers conducted among refugees in Congo Brazzaville (Almaro, 2020). Studies have focused mainly on reproductive health, malnutrition and communicable diseases especially epidemics. In the Middle East, studies have shown that cervical cancers are often paid less attention and patients with cancers experience several barriers to care including poor access to specialized cancer treatment facilities and specialists (Saadi, 2012). International humanitarian organizations and health planners focus on communicable diseases and epidemics with high fatality including cholera, malaria and malnutrition (El Saghir NS, 2018). Yet cancer diagnoses among refugees present a major health burden on the health systems of the host countries (Spiegel P, 2014). Findings from this pioneer study suggest the need for public health interventions aimed at increasing awareness of cervical cancer symptoms among the women in Bulacan.

The purpose of this study was to assess the level of awareness in the prevention of cervical cancer among women in Bulacan. It aimed to focus on

\*Staff Nurse, Malolos Maternity Hospita & Eye Centerl, Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines.

measuring the knowledge of cervical cancer risk factors, signs and symptoms and preventive measures among women of reproductive age in Bulacan. This study highlighted the need for formal educational programs for the healthcare workers specifically to improve their knowledge regarding the risk factors and early signs and symptoms of cervical cancer. The result aided in showing the importance of improving coordination amongst the entire medical team to encourage prevention and enhance care and improves outcomes for patients affected by cervical cancer.

## Objective

The study determined and assessed the level of awareness of the mothers on the risk factors, signs and symptoms, and preventive measures of cervical cancer.

## Methods

### Research Design

This research utilized descriptive-correlational method. It involves soliciting information on the level of awareness of the mothers on the risk factors, signs and symptoms, and preventive measures of cervical cancer.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were mothers who have consulted with Obstetrical-Gynecologist serviced in a maternity hospital in Bulacan wherein 100 patients took part as respondents of the study. The inclusion criteria in this study included the demographic profiles of the respondents like age, educational attainment, and civil status, number of children, number of pregnancy, and age of first pregnancy, and cervical vaccine record of respondents. The exclusion criteria included the pregnant women, patients with psychological illnesses, patients who are not able or willing to sign informed consent.

## Research Instrument and Data Collection

This study utilized a self-constructed instrument guided by the exhaustive review of literature on the risk factors, signs and symptoms, and preventive measures of cervical cancer.

The researcher-constructed questionnaire was presented to the research adviser for validation. The comments and suggestions of the research adviser were incorporated in the revised copy of the questionnaire. Then, the researcher presented the same to the experts who are both principals and district coordinators in English grammar for further technical validation. All the comments and suggestions were incorporated on the final copy for distribution.

A pilot testing was conducted by the researcher to test the reliability of the questionnaire. This is done by asking ten (10) respondents who are non-respondents to answer the items in the questionnaire and ran Cronbach alpha test. This resulted to a level higher than the significant level of 0.60. Hence, the questionnaire was deemed reliable and was used to gather the needed data for the completion of the study.

## Statistical Treatment of Data

The data collected were tabulated and processed using the Likert Scale for the knowledge of the respondents regarding the cervical cancer risk factors, signs, and symptoms, and preventive measures. In order to analyze and interpret the data gathered the following statistical measures were used in identifying the relationship between the level of awareness of respondents on the prevention of cervical cancer and their profile.

## Ethical Consideration

The Ethics Review Committee of La Consolacion University of the Philippines reviewed this research study to ensure that it did not violate ethical considerations that should be observed.

## Result

**Table 1: Cervical Cancer Risk Factor**

| Items                                                                                             | Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------------------|
| 1. The following are risk factors of cervical cancer, How broad are your knowledge and awareness? | 3.59 | Moderately Aware      |
| a. Sexual history: become sexually active at an early age (before age 16)                         | 3.42 | Somewhat Aware        |
| b. Multiple sex partners                                                                          | 3.42 | Somewhat Aware        |
| c. Unsafe sexual intercourse                                                                      | 3.57 | Moderately Aware      |
| d. Infection of the cervix with Human Papilloma Virus infection (a sexually transmitted disease)  | 3.60 | Moderately Aware      |
| e. Family history of cervical cancer                                                              | 3.00 | Somewhat Aware        |

|                                                     |             |                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| f. Smoking                                          | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| g. Use of hormonal drug (ex. Diethylstilbestrol)    | 3.03        | Somewhat Aware        |
| h. Obesity                                          | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| i. Sexual activity with men who are not circumcised | 3.42        | Somewhat Aware        |
| <b>Weighted Mean</b>                                | <b>3.30</b> | <b>Somewhat Aware</b> |

The knowledge of cervical cancer risk factors, signs and symptoms and preventive measures in terms of risk factors of cervical cancer and how broad are your knowledge and awareness. The highest risk factor was infection of the cervix with Human Papilloma Virus infection (a sexually transmitted disease) with weighted mean of 3.60 and verbally interpreted as moderately aware. It shows that

majority of them were somewhat aware of the risks with weighted mean of 3.30. HPV is the most prevalent sexually transmitted infection. In 2018, over 43 million HPV infections were reported, with the majority occurring among adults in their late teens and early twenties. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

**Table 2: Possible Signs and Symptoms**

| Items                                                                                                      | Mean        | Verbal Interpretation |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 2. What is the level of your awareness and knowledge of the following list of possible signs and symptoms? | 3.42        | Somewhat Aware        |
| a. Abnormal bleeding after sexual intercourse                                                              | 3.57        | Moderately Aware      |
| b. Heavy menstrual flow or excessive menstrual flow                                                        | 3.60        | Moderately Aware      |
| c. Foul smelling vaginal discharge                                                                         | 3.00        | Moderately Aware      |
| d. Pain during sexual intercourse                                                                          | 3.00        | Moderately Aware      |
| e. Increased urinary frequency                                                                             | 3.03        | Somewhat Aware        |
| f. Lower back pain                                                                                         | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| g. Weight loss                                                                                             | 3.57        | Moderately Aware      |
| h. Leg pain or swelling                                                                                    | 3.60        | Moderately Aware      |
| i. Easy fatigability                                                                                       | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| <b>Weighted Mean</b>                                                                                       | <b>3.30</b> | <b>Somewhat Aware</b> |

The highest signs and symptoms were heavy menstrual flow or excessive menstrual flow and leg pain or swelling. It shows that majority of them were somewhat aware of the possible signs and symptoms. Vaginal bleeding is a common symptom,

occurring in roughly 80% of cases. Unusual bleeding can appear as heavier periods than normal or post-menopausal bleeding when it occurs when you are not expecting your regular period, such as after having sex.

**Table 3: Preventive Measures Avoiding Cervical Cancer**

| Items                                                                                                                              | Mean        | Verbal Interpretation |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 3. Level of awareness of the following preventive measures                                                                         | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| a. regular check up with a Obstetrical-Gynecologist for examination like:<br>-pelvic examination<br>-pap smear<br>-cervical biopsy | 3.03        | Somewhat Aware        |
| b. practice safe sex                                                                                                               | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| c. cessation of smoking                                                                                                            | 3.59        | Moderately Aware      |
| d. cervical vaccine                                                                                                                | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| e. eating a balance diet                                                                                                           | 3.42        | Somewhat Aware        |
| f. use of barrier contraceptive instead of oral contraceptive (ex. Condom)                                                         | 3.42        | Somewhat Aware        |
| g. education related to reproductive health<br>(Ex. family planning; sex education)                                                | 3.00        | Somewhat Aware        |
| <b>Weighted Mean</b>                                                                                                               | <b>3.18</b> | <b>Somewhat Aware</b> |

Smoking cessation was the most effective preventive intervention. It appears that the majority

of them were aware of the precautions. If you have the human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that

causes cervical cancer, smoking and being near individuals who smoke increases your risk of developing cervical cancer. By quitting smoking and avoiding others who smoke, anyone can lower their risk of developing cervical cancer. The Surgeon General of the United States has stated that cervical cancer is strongly linked to tobacco smoking. As a result, while HPV is the primary cause of cervical cancer, smoking cigarettes is seen as a cofactor, implying that specific strains of HPV and cancer-causing chemicals associated with smoking may work in concert. (West, 2021).

## Conclusion

Cervical cancer rates have dropped dramatically in recent years. Women, on the other hand, continue to suffer from an illness that is potentially avoidable and curable. Women who are missed for screening or who do not receive any screening remain the most vulnerable to the development of cervical cancer. As a result, interdisciplinary healthcare providers must remain watchful by performing routine Pap screenings on all suitable women.

## Conflicts of Interest Disclosure

The authors declare there are no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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