

Accessibility of information on cervical cancer among women of higher learning institutions in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania

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Abstract

Background: Cervical cancer, the most common cancer among women in Tanzania is strongly linked to Human Papilloma Virus. Precancerous lesions detected by Papanicolaus smear screening. It is one of the preventable cancers and thus making access to health information regarding cervical cancer available and easily accessible to higher learning institutions and communities will be a foundation in the fight against cervical cancer.

Objective: To assess accessibility and use of cervical cancer information by women in higher learning institutions in Ilala and Kinondoni districts Dar es Salaam.

Method: This was a descriptive cross-sectional study that was carried out by using 300 questionnaires among medical and non-medical respondents from Kairuki University, Institute of financial Management and College of Business Education. Data collected included demographic data, health information, knowledge, and awareness of cervical cancer. Descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis were performed in significance level was set up $p \leq 0.001$. Mean age was 23.16 years.

Result: Majority of respondents got their source of information from media, TV, and radio. Screening information on cervical cancer was accessed by 85% of medical and 61 % of nonmedical respondents. On answering the questions of whether they would use the cervical cancer information, nearly all respondents answered that they would use the information and requested for cervical cancer materials to be supplied to their institutions. Almost all respondents admitted that they and heard about cervical cancer and about 73 % of medical respondents and 38 percent of non-medical respondents respectively pointed out that cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women in Tanzania. However, 57 % medical and 13.1% of non-medical respondents knew about HPV vaccine and its practice value. Knowledge of cervical cancer demonstrated respectively by medical and non-medical respondents were 50% and 15.5% on causes, 71% and 17.1% on symptoms, 83 % and 44% on risk factors such as multi-sexual partners and 79% and 32% on early age activity. About 63 percent of medical and 41% percent

of non-medical respondents indicated that the diseases could be treated and preventive measures through public vi health education were advocated by 88 % of medical and 63.3% respectively and 73 % and 15% by screening women for early signs of cervical cancer.

Conclusion: Medical respondents showed the highest level in all areas and a high level of awareness of the disease compared to non-medical respondents. It is important that awareness campaigns, mobilization campaigns and National cancer programme should be carried out by ORHI, WAMATA and others to private sectors and general public, creation of cervical cancer prevention polices and strategies at all levels of the communities.