

**Conference Paper**

## **Cervical cancer prevention in Tanzania: Health services and health policy influences on a preventable cancer**

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Authors: Renicha Mccree  
Harvard University  
Nedra Lisovicz, University of Alabama at Birmingham  
Mary Rose Giattas,  
Innocent Antony Semali  
Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences

### **Abstract**

Background: Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among women in Tanzania. Fewer than 20% of women in Tanzania present for care when cervical cancer disease is in its early, preventable stages. Development of structural factors related to health policy and health services may alleviate disease mortality and morbidity. Methods: Fifty stakeholders from government, nongovernmental, and healthcare organizations including the Tanzanian Ministry of Health (MOH) completed semi-structured face-to-face interviews to determine existing health services for cervical cancer, and capacity for implementation of a community-based program to promote screenings. Each interview lasted approximately two hours and was comprised of individuals and teams of stakeholders. Qualitative data analyses were performed using NVivo software. Results: Qualitative themes were related to political will, health services infrastructure, and partnership building. Political will and public/private collaboration exists for the development of a program to facilitate screenings for cervical cancer. The MOH committed to improve health services by increasing capacity for cervical cancer screen and treat protocols. Additionally, a public/private team will develop a strategic plan for cervical cancer control and prevention to define specific health policies and screening recommendations. Conclusion: Increasing the capacity for cervical cancer screenings will improve reproductive health services for women. Additionally, the development of cervical cancer screening policies may decrease deaths and presentation of late stage disease. Cervical cancer prevention is a public health imperative for women in low resource settings. It is a preventable cancer and therefore a major social justice issue affecting women, their families and communities.