Cervical Cancer Awareness

As you know, January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. Attached is new information: a Cervical Cancer Data Brief. This document has the latest statistics about cervical cancer in Michigan.

Cervical cancer can be diagnosed early via Pap testing and appropriate follow-up and simple lack of screening is one of the biggest risk factors for cervical cancer. Recommendations from both health systems and providers to women to obtain indicated screening would address this issue.

Interestingly, the three most common reasons given by Michigan women (ages 40+) for not having a Pap test in the past 3 years are:

- No symptoms (21.4%),
- **Lack of recommendation by physician** (13.4%)
- Lack of insurance coverage/cost (11.4%)."

The MCC recommends women receive cervical cancer screening starting at age 21. Cervical cancer is 100% treatable when found early.
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Cervical Cancer is a disease that affects the cervix. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus (womb) that leads to the vagina. Cervical cancer is a very common disease worldwide; it is the third most common type of cancer in women. The disease begins as a pre-cancerous condition which is detectable by Pap smear, and is 100% treatable. Most women in the US who are diagnosed with cervical cancer have not had regular Pap smears or did not follow up on abnormal test results. The major risk factor for cervical cancer is infection with Human Papilloma Virus, a sexually transmitted infection.\(^1\) Other risk factors for cervical cancer include multiple sexual partners, young age at sexual onset, and smoking.

In 2007, 412 women were newly diagnosed with cervical cancer in Michigan and an estimated 11,000 women were diagnosed in the US.\(^2,3\) The incidence rate for cervical cancer in 2007 was higher in Michigan (8.2 per 100,000 individuals) than in the US (6.4 per 100,000).\(^4\) Between 1997 and 2007, the cervical cancer incidence rate declined significantly both in the US and within the state of Michigan. However, the incidence rate of cervical cancer has consistently been higher in Michigan than in the US as a whole (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Cervical Cancer Incidence Rate per 100,000 in the US and Michigan, 1997-2007](image)

Certain demographic groups are at higher risk for cervical cancer than others. In Michigan, older women and African American women have higher cervical cancer incidence rates than younger women and whites (Figure 2).

In 2007, 108 women in Michigan and 3670 women in the US died of cervical cancer.\(^2,3\) The mortality rate has shown a slight decline since 1997 in Michigan (Figure 3).\(^4\)
Among the counties in Michigan, there are some differences in cervical cancer mortality rates. Most counties have mortality rates that are either similar statistically or significantly lower than the cervical cancer mortality rate for the entire state. However, Wayne County has a cervical cancer mortality rate that is significantly higher than the state rate (Figure 4). This may be due to a higher proportion of county residents from ethnic minorities like African-Americans who have higher incidence rates, or it may be due to generally lower Pap screening rates in the county.

One important factor that contributes to high mortality rates is the stage of disease at diagnosis. Women diagnosed with cervical cancer at the localized stage have much higher survival rates than those diagnosed at regional or distant stage (Figure 5). For instance, of all women diagnosed with localized cervical cancer between 1999 and 2006 in the US, 91% of them were alive after 5 years compared with only 17% of women who were diagnosed at distant stage.

In Michigan, about half of women diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer presented at the localized stage, 27% at the regional stage and about 10% at the distant stage.

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**Figure 3: Cervical Cancer Mortality Rate in the US and Michigan, 1997-2007**

![Graph showing cervical cancer mortality rates in the US and Michigan from 1997 to 2007.](image)

**Figure 4: Cervical Cancer Mortality Rates by Michigan County, 1999-2008**

![Map showing cervical cancer mortality rates by Michigan county from 1999 to 2008.](image)

*Counties with significantly lower mortality rates*
*Counties without significantly different mortality rates*
*Counties with significantly higher mortality rates*

*Differences in age-adjusted mortality rates were statistically tested at 95% confidence levels to compare each county with the all-county rate.*
Future intervention programs focused on improving Pap screening rates should focus on educating women about the need for regular screening even in the absence of symptoms, educating healthcare providers about recommending regular Pap screening, and making free or subsidized Pap screening available to low income women. It will also be important to improve public education efforts about cervical cancer. Over 40% of Michigan women 40 years and older reported not knowing any risk factor or warning signs for cervical cancer, although almost 80% of women correctly agreed that women should be screened for cervical cancer regardless of age.

The three most common reasons given by Michigan women (ages 40+) for not having a Pap test in the past 3 years are: no symptoms (21.4%), lack of recommendation by physician (13.4%) and lack of insurance coverage/cost (11.4%).

Screening with Pap smears has been shown to be highly effective in detecting cervical cancer in early stages when treatment is highly effective and survival rate is very high.

In Michigan, Pap screening rates are very high, with about 99% of women ages 40 and older reporting having ever had a Pap test. However, the proportion of women who reported having had a pap test in the past 3 years is 80%. There is also significant variation in the proportion of adult women (ages 18 and older) who report having had a pap test in the past 3 years based on demographic characteristic (Figure 6).

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**References:**
2. Michigan Department of Community Health: [http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2944_5323—,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2944_5323—,00.html)