

Essay

The impact of health education on early diagnosis and treatment of human papilloma virus among women in Sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review

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The ultimate goal of cervical cancer screening is to decrease the incidence of and subsequent mortality from invasive cervical cancer. The impact of health education on the treatment of HPV is important; therefore more emphasis should be laid in the sub-Saharan African countries and also a yearly screening process should be conducted.

Key words: Human papiloma Virus (HPV), cervical cancer, Sub-Saharan Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Global Impact For rural innovation foundation (GIRIF) is a non-governmental organization that is aimed at seeing that the African woman is empowered in capacity through education and is protected against issues related to reproductive health particularly cervical cancer largely associated with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

In developing countries, cervical cancer is rated the most common form of cancer among women. There are approximately 500,000 cervical cancer cases per year in records with 275,000 associated deaths every year; 20% occur in Africa (Allen, 2012). Several efforts are being directed towards awareness creation in so far as cervical cancer is concerned. However, there is the need to do even much more with greater commitment from governments through their ministries of health and civil society. Substantial costs are known to be involved in providing the needed infrastructure, manpower,

consumables, follow-up and surveillance for both organized and opportunistic screening programmes for cervical cancer. However, there gaps associate with reduction in the prevalence of cervical cancer still remain wide.

Owing to limitations posed by the inadequacies in provision of health care resources, developing countries struggle to afford the needed models for a comprehensive and frequent cervical cancer screening programme. Many low-to-middle income countries, including most countries in sub-Saharan Africa especially Nigeria and Ghana, though have scarce resources and inadequate capacity within the health services to organize and sustain an elaborate kind of screening programme have even greater challenges in creating awareness through health education to encourage voluntary screening activities.

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Health education provides reliable sources of information easily accessible to the general population on specific health issues. This provides a means of creating awareness, increasing knowledge base and making health service accessible to the population. As people become more aware of the risks associated with cervical cancer, become familiar with earlier symptoms of the condition and are familiar with where to access screening services it is plausible to conclude that they would be more willing to patronize the service. Health education therefore is key to the early diagnosis and management of cervical cancer just as it is for other disease conditions such as prostate cancer.

The Global Impact for Rural Innovation Foundation (GIRIF) is set to become a major contributor in using health education to reduce the disease burden associated with cervical cancer.

One key strategy to be utilized is making cervical cancer screening accessible to women within the West African sub-region through effective community-based health education programmes and screening exercises. The ultimate goal of cervical cancer screening is to decrease the incidence of, and subsequent mortality associated with or caused by the condition. Greater emphasis to encourage regular annual screening for all women particularly of reproductive age will be encouraged.

In many countries in West Africa, accessibility to the right information is hampered by high illiteracy rates, long standing superstitious beliefs, social inequalities among others. The impact of health education on the treatment and management of HPV is therefore critical. Community-based interventions focused on creating the needed awareness especially in rural and peri-urban communities will go a long way to providing the needed information to many more women who otherwise have no information of cervical cancer, how it is contracted, how it is managed and how it can be managed.

Kindly visit our website on www.girif.org and support the movement.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

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