

HPV Primary Screening: Views from screening aged women in Australia

Australian Society for Psychosocial
Obstetrics & Gynaecology

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HEALTHCARE

A RESEARCH COLLABORATION FOR REDUCING
OVERDIAGNOSIS AND OVERTREATMENT

Background

- Understanding how to communicate reductions to screening effectively without raising public concern in an important area for research
- Opposition from the public in other countries in response to a change in guidelines for cancer screening programs
- Following the changes announced to the cervical screening program in Australia, similar opposition has been met

Background

The Sydney Morning Herald

NATIONAL HEALTHCARE

Petition against cervical screening changes 'woefully misinformed', says AMA

"May 1st will see changes that will put women's lives at risk but save the government money," wrote Isabella Rossi, who launched the petition last week.

Open Access

Research

BMJ Open 'It has saved thousands of lives, so why change it?' Content analysis of objections to cervical screening programme changes in Australia

Helena M Obermair, Rachael H Dodd, Carissa Bonner, Jesse Jansen, Kirsten McCaffery

"The changes were made and nobody had any idea. I'd love someone to be able to get down on our level and explain the testing."

CERVICAL
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Australian Petition Reveals 5 Myths About New Cervical Cancer Screening Program



MARCH 13, 2017



BY CAROLINA HENRIQUES

IN NEWS.

Background: renewed cervical screening program

On 1st December 2017, the renewal of the cervical screening program:

New test: The Cervical Screening Test (cells from the cervix tested for HPV infection)...

Increased screening interval: The Cervical Screening Test is every 5 years ...

Increased starting age: Women will be invited for a Cervical Screening Test from the age of 25 years ...

New exit age: Women will have their last Cervical Screening Test between 70 and 74 years of age ...

Research aims

- Investigate the attitudes and concerns of women to understand the implications of the changes to the program
- Understand which health messages may help to diminish concerns of women and ensure women are not deterred from attending for screening

Methods

- Six Focus Groups:
 - 18-30 year olds (x2)
 - 31-50 year olds (x2)
 - 51-74 year olds (x2)
- November 2017, held in the Sydney area
- Presentation of information from the Department of Health website
- Discussions throughout of attitudes and understanding about the changes
- Qualitative thematic analysis

Results: Sample

Sample (n=49)	n (%)
Age	
18-30 year olds	16 (32.7)
31-50 year olds	13 (26.5)
51-74 year olds	20 (40.8)
Marital status	
Married/living with partner	23 (47.9)
Divorced/separated	8 (16.7)
Widowed	1 (2.1)
Single	16 (33.3)
Children	
Yes	24 (50)
No	24 (50)
Family history	
Yes	1 (2.1)
No	46 (97.9)

Sample (n=49)	n (%)
Education	
University degree	22 (47.8)
Diploma or certificate	10 (21.7)
High school certificate	11 (23.9)
School certificate	3 (6.5)
Employment	
Yes, full time	20 (41.7)
Yes, part time	12 (25)
No, I'm retired	10 (20.8)
No	6 (12.5)
Last Pap smear	
Less than 2 years ago	28 (63.6)
2-3 years ago	5 (11.4)
3-5 years ago	7 (15.9)
Over 5 years ago	1 (2.3)
Don't know	3 (6.8)

Results: Awareness

- Around 30% had heard something about the changes

Um, my doctor told me when I was having my last one that I wouldn't have to do it for another 5 years. (51-74, CBD)

- Awareness of HPV was limited

I didn't know... I didn't know there was such thing as HPV (laughs). (18-30, Parramatta)

Results: Advantages and concerns about changes

Advantages

Test: More up-to-date test (better testing)

Test: Better name (cervical screening vs pap test)

Test: Earlier detection

Screening interval: Less likely to be put off if only every 5 years

Screening interval: Avoid uncomfortable experience as often

Screening interval: Save taxpayers money

Screening interval: Less hassle

Starting age: Gives time to educate women (later age of 25)

Register: Notification of invitation

Results: Advantages and concerns about changes

Concerns

New test: Is it safe?

Starting age: Kids are sexually active younger – 25 too late

Starting age: How will you educate women >25 about test once left school

Screening interval: More likely to put it off if every 5 years – ‘can’t be that important’

Screening interval: 5 years too long for sexually active – problem might arise in that time, no longer early detection

Overall: Cost-cutting

Overall: Lack of information

Results: Natural progression of cervical cancer

- Need to understand what HPV is and progression of HPV to cervical cancer

Well, I guess if it takes a long time, up to 10 years, for the HPV virus to affect the cells then you might detect it in a year and then it's going to be a number of years until it actually affects you and it might be a reason. (18-30, CBD)

Results: Incidence of cervical cancer

- Understanding the incidence of cervical cancer in younger and older women reassured women about the changes

I felt the, the thing that made me a bit calmer though was that it said that there's been no change in, um, deaths or, um, I think picking up cancer in women aged 20-25 or something since they've had a screening program. So it made me feel a bit calmer about moving the age to 25. Seems legit. (18-30, CBD)

Results: Transition to the new program and screening pathway

- Next screening test 2 years after their last test,
- This will be the cervical screening test – if results normal, invite back in 5 years

It's saying to continue for two years.

It's saying to continue, yeah.

I've gone for the first one and then I'll go, they'll put you on the five-year register after that (laughs).

They'll say continue with the two year thing and then they'll swap you over.

(31-50, Parramatta)

Results: Other information

- Also wanted information about screening register, talked about gender inequalities and overdiagnosis

They're saying that if you were to detect something and treat it you are actually causing problems later in life, so you're better off not treating it.

Is that what they're saying?

They're saying they normally resolve themselves, most of the time. (31-50, CBD)

Implications

- We need to:
 - explain that cervical screening is for asymptomatic women
 - educate women about HPV and the natural progression to cervical cancer
 - educate women about the symptoms given the longer gap between tests
 - educate women about how uncommon cervical cancer is – cervical abnormalities do not mean cancer
 - explain the transition to the new program
 - explain what happens if you test positive – screening pathway
 - explain that men also get HPV

Questions?

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