



CERVICAL CANCER

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Matthew Reynolds] Welcome to our program on cervical cancer, I'm your host Matthew Reynolds. Cervical cancer was once the leading cause of death for women in the United States. During the past 40 years, the number of deaths from cervical cancer has declined significantly each year, primarily because of the wide spread use of the Pap test to detect cervical abnormalities. However, a recent CDC study found that, despite intense efforts to promote Pap testing in the U.S. in the last 10 years, high rates of cervical cancer persist among women in the South and among African American and Hispanic women. Here to discuss the study is Dr. Mona Saraiya of the CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control in Atlanta. Welcome to the show Dr. Saraiya.

[Dr. Saraiya] Thank you, Matthew; it's good to be here.

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Saraiya, why is it so important for women to get regular Pap tests?

[Dr. Saraiya] Getting regular Pap tests can save a woman's life. Cervical cancer can usually be prevented if pre-cancers are found by a Pap test and treated. About half of the women in the United States who develop cervical cancer have never had a pap test.

[Matthew Reynolds] Your study looked at the most recent data on cervical cancer cases. How did you conduct the study?

[Dr. Saraiya] We examined cancer registry data from CDC's National Program of Cancer Registries and NCI's SEER Cancer Registry from the years 1998-2002, and these data cover 87% of the U.S. population in women of all ages. And for the first time ever, because we have such a large coverage, we were able to examine data by geography, such as like by state and by region.

[Matthew Reynolds] What exactly are the study findings?

[Dr. Saraiya] From the 60 thousand cases of cervical cancer that we examined during that time period, we found that African American women had 50% more cases of cervical cancer compared with white woman, and Hispanic women had 60% more cases of cervical cancer compared with non-Hispanic women, and some of the highest disparities were seen among older women. African American women between the ages of 50 and 64 had 67% more cases, Hispanic women had 89% more cases, and Asian women in that age group had 34% more cases compared to white women. And we also found that the Southern region as a whole had the highest number of cervical cancer cases of any region.

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Saraiya, you mentioned earlier the importance of women getting pap smears. Why do you think that they're not getting them regularly?

[Dr. Saraiya] For certain groups, women just may not be getting screened ever or not getting screened regularly. This could be due to a number of reasons. Not having access to the screening services themselves, low awareness of the importance of the pap testing, and other cultural reasons. For example, we know that lower income women and immigrant women are less likely to get screened. The second reason may be due to inadequate follow-up of an abnormal Pap test result.

[Matthew Reynolds] What role could the new cervical cancer vaccine play in preventing cervical cancer?

[Dr. Saraiya] Well Matthew, the new HPV vaccine, which targets the 2 types that cause 70% of cervical cancer, will have an impact on reducing not only cancer but also the pre-cancers and the number of abnormal Pap tests and procedures that are associated with that. We don't expect to see an impact on cancer until 20 years from now, but the impact seen on these pre-cancers and abnormal pap tests was expected to be a lot earlier. The HPV vaccine, as you may have heard, is recommended for 11-12 year old girls and can be given to girls as young as age 9. It's also recommended for 13-26 year old girls or women who have not received or completed the vaccine series.

[Matthew Reynolds] What is CDC doing to address cervical cancer in the most at-risk populations?

[Dr. Saraiya] CDC is doing several things in both the areas of screening and vaccine. Through the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program, we're trying to make sure that low income women and immigrant women get access to timely screening and diagnostic services. CDC has also developed HPV educational brochures for both the providers and the public, to raise awareness of HPV and the link to cervical cancer and the need for the Pap test, as well as the vaccine, for African American women, Hispanic women, and these materials are also being tested for Vietnamese, Philippino, Korean, American Indian, and Alaskan Native women.

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Saraiya, can you summarize for us what women can do to prevent their risk of cervical cancer?

[Dr. Saraiya] Regular pap tests are recommended for all women. Women who are uninsured or have no insurance can contact the state health department to find out how to get a low cost or no cost Pap test through CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program at 1-800-CDC-INFO. There is a HPV vaccine that's available and recommended, and there are federal health

programs, such as the Vaccine for Children Program. The Vaccine for Children Program provides free vaccines for children and teens under 19 years of age who are uninsured or Medicaid eligible. And lastly, all women that receive the HPV vaccine should continue to receive regular cervical cancer screening, according to the established screening recommendations, because the HPV vaccine does not substitute for routine cervical cancer screening.

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Saraiya, thanks for taking the time to come in and talk to us today.

[Dr. Saraiya] Thank you Matthew, it was a real pleasure.

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