Public Awareness and Knowledge of Pap Smear as a Screening Test for Cervical Cancer among Saudi Population in Riyadh City

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Abstract

Aims: To explore the public awareness, knowledge, and attitudes of Saudi women towards Pap smear as a screening test for cervical cancer.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study took place in four major secondary and tertiary healthcare hospitals located in the capital city Riyadh between January 2016 and June 2016. A self-administered, coded, close-ended survey was randomly distributed to 1000 non-single women attending the obstetrics/gynecology outpatient clinics or inpatient wards.

Results: Five hundred and seven women participated in the survey (overall response rate: 50.7%). The vast majority of respondents aged between 20-40 years (88%) and were married (94.1%), Saudi citizens (96.5%), university educated (45.6%) and housewives (64.5%). A total of 234 women (46.2%) did not hear whatsoever about Pap smear previously. Only 273 women (53.9%) heard about it, mostly during their hospital visits for obstetric/gynecologic purposes (57.1%). A sum of 381 women (75.2%) did not do a single Pap smear previously. A sum of 383 women (75.5%) reported that their physicians never advised them to do Pap smear. Regarding knowledge of Pap smear, 415 women (82%) did not know when to start doing Pap smear, 471 women (92.9%) did not know how frequently they should do Pap smear and 476 women (93.9%) did not know when to stop doing Pap smear. Moreover, 456 women (89.9%) did not know the difference between Pap smear and high vaginal swap. A total of 429 women (84.6%) never requested their physician to do Pap smear. Almost all women (95.3%) expressed an interest in knowing more information about the Pap smear screening test.

Conclusion: The awareness and knowledge of Pap smear as a screening test for cervical cancer among Saudi population living in Riyadh is unsatisfactory. There is an urgent necessity to educate and foster awareness concerning cervical cancer and its screening through Pap smear.

Keywords: cervical cancer, pap smear, screening, prevention, awareness, riyadh, saudi arabia