Awareness of Cervical Cancer among the College Women at Dinajpur, Bangladesh

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Cervical cancer is the commonest cancer cause of death among women in developing countries. In this study we determined the level of awareness of cervical cancer and screening of cervical cancer. 107 subjects were interviewed. They were college students. The knowledge and awareness among the women about cervical cancer; its screening and vaccination were evaluated by a pre-tested questionnaire. 87 (81.3%) had heard of cervical cancer. 26 (24.3%) women were aware of cervical cancer screening test VIA. This study concluded that dissemination of information should focus on all women especially eligible women (aged 30 years and above). It is also of vital importance to carefully package cervical cancer and screening messages.

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Key words: Awareness, Cervical cancer, Dinajpur

Introduction

Cervical cancer is the commonest cancer cause of death among women in developing countries.[1] Mortality due to cervical cancer is also an indicator of health inequities,[2] as 86% of all deaths[3] due to cervical cancer are in developing, low- and middle-income countries.[4]

The long transition time from a premalignant lesion to frank cancer of the cervix affords sufficient time for early detection and nearly complete cure even in secondary health care centers. However, this window of opportunity which has enabled the developed countries to reduce the incidence of cancer of the cervix[5] would be wasted if the level of screening is low.

VIA provides instant results and those eligible for treatment can receive treatment of the precancerous lesions using cryotherapy on the same day and in the same health facility. This "see and treat" method ensures adherence to treatment soon after diagnosis, hence stemming the problem of failing to honour patient referrals.[6,7,8]

The main barriers to testing in developing countries are a lack of awareness of the disease and screening, women not availing themselves of screening services and lack of political will to provide the service.

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In this study we determine the level of awareness of cervical cancer and screening of cervical cancer.

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Methods

This cross sectional study was carried out at Dinajpur Government Women College, Dinajpur from July 2016 to December 2016 for a period of six months.

107 subjects were interviewed. They were college students. The knowledge and awareness among the women about cervical cancer; its screening and vaccination were evaluated by a pre-tested questionnaire.

Data were collected through direct interview of the subjects. Collected data was checked and edited first. Then they were processed with the help of software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 16 and analyzed. The test statistics used to analysis the data were descriptive statistics and Frequency.

Results

107 subjects were interviewed. They were college students. Mean age (±Sd) of the subjects were 22.21 (±2.01) years, ranging from 18-29 years. Single women were 89 (83.2 %) while the rest were married. 5 of the married subjects had 1 child each. 15 (14%) had secondary level of education and 92 (86%) had higher secondary level of education.31 (29%) subjects had monthly family income below 10,000 BDT, 41 (38.3%) had family income BDT 10,000 to 20,000 and rest 35 (32.7%) had that above 20,000 BDT.

Of the 107 participating women, 87 (81.3%) had heard of cervical cancer. [Table VI]

26 (24.3%) women were aware of cervical cancer screening test VIA. 81(75.75) do not know anything about the test. [Table VII]

Table I: Age distribution of study subjects

	N	Minimum	Maximum
Age	107	18	29

Table II: Distribution of the study subjects by educational status

Education	Frequency	%
Secondary	15	14.0
Above Secondary	92	86.0
Total	107	100.0

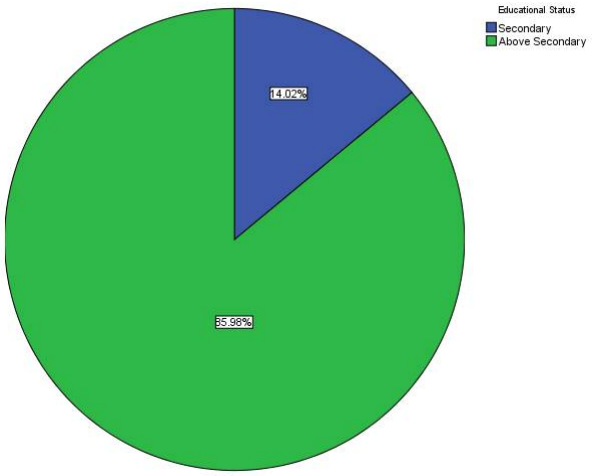

Table III: Distribution of the study subjects by monthly family income

Monthly Family Income (BDT)	Frequency	Percent
0-10,000	31	29.0
10001-20000	41	38.3
20001-above	35	32.7
Total	107	100.0

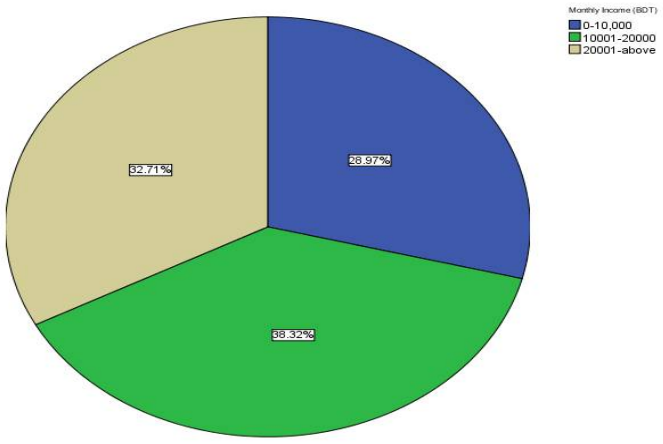

Fig 1. Monthly income

Table IV: Distribution of the study subjects by marital status

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Married	18	16.8
Unmarried	89	83.2
Total	107	100.0

Table V: Distribution of the study subjects by number of children

Number of Children	Frequency	%
No children	102	95.3
1 Children	5	4.7
Total	107	100.0

Table VI: Distribution of the study subjects by awareness about cervical cancer

Have you heard about cervical cancer	Frequency	%
Yes	87	81.3
No	8	7.5
No Comment	12	11.2
Total	107	100.0

Table VII: Distribution of the study subjects by awareness about VIA test

Have you heard about VIA	Frequency	%
Yes	26	24.3
No	81	75.7
Total	107	100.0

Discussion

In this study, the knowledge and awareness among the women about cervical cancer, its screening and vaccination were evaluated.

Of the 107 participating women, 87 (81.3%) had heard of cervical cancer. A study in Batswana found that around three quarters of women had heard of cervical cancer.[9] In other studies in developing countries, 12% to 61% of those surveyed had heard of cervical cancer.[10, 11, 12] A study done among female undergraduates in Ibadan have found this awareness in 71% participants.[13]

26 (24.3%) of the respondents in this study have heard about VIA test for cervical cancer screening. Papri et el in their study, carried out in Chittagong, Bangladesh found that Only 22.44% of the participants knew that it is a screening test for cervical cancer.[14] Ezem in his study in Nigeria have found that 52.8% of the respondents were aware of cervical screening.[15]

That screening prevents deaths is not in doubt.[16] This has reduced the scourge of this disease in advanced countries. However, low income countries are unlikely to be able screening programmes as sophisticated as those in the developed countries. A national screening policy has been advocated,[17,18] but while we wait for this, greater public awareness should be created and greater use should be made by physicians of opportunistic cervical screening.

Conclusion

Dissemination of information should focus on all women especially eligible women (aged 30 years and above).

It is of vital importance to carefully package cervical cancer and screening messages and also to ensure that the wider female population is reached. There is a great need to empower women to understand their health care needs and also basic screening procedures so as to increase the uptake of this service.

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