

THE INFORMATION LEVEL OF THE RURAL AREA POPULATION REGARDING THE CERVICAL CANCER

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Abstract: Cervical cancer is an important public health problem, in terms of the incidence, of the mortality rate and the large number of cases detected in advanced stages. Cervical cancer affects women in the flower of age, often still active and responsible for their children and families. Premature interruption of a woman's life involves multiple consequences on the familial, social and economical environment. The study is based on the application of a questionnaire on a group of 200 female gender persons from rural areas in Buzău County. The results show a low informing degree about cervical cancer and screening method "Pap-test". Also, the presentation of the studied population at the gynaecological consult and screening test is low; this behaviour is related to the level of training and the level of monthly income. It highlights the need for information and education of women in rural areas relating to prevention.

Cuvinte cheie: cancer de col uterin, screening, informare

Rezumat: Cancerul de col uterin reprezintă o importantă problemă de sănătate publică, din punct de vedere al incidenței crescute, al ratei de mortalitate și al numărului mare de cazuri depistate în stadii avansate. Cancerul de col uterin afectează femeile în floarea vârstei, adesea încă active și responsabile de copiii și familiile lor. Întreruperea prematură a vieții unei femei implică multiple consecințe asupra mediului familial, social și economic. Studiul se bazează pe aplicarea unui chestionar de opinie pe un lot de 200 de persoane de gen feminin, din mediul rural în județul Buzău. Rezultatele evidențiază un grad scăzut de informare al femeilor privind cancerul de col uterin și metoda de screening – testul Babeș-Papanicolaou. De asemenea, prezentarea populației studiate la consult ginecologic și la testul de screening este scăzută, acest comportament fiind legat de nivelul de instruire și de nivelul de venit lunar. Se evidențiază nevoia de informare și de educare a femeilor din mediul rural privind prevenția.

INTRODUCTION

Cervical cancer is the first mortality cause for women of childbearing age in Romania. In the last two decades, Romania constantly occupies the first place in Europe in the field of mortality and incidence of this disease.(1) In 2012, the incidence of cervical cancer has reached a rate of 28.7 new diagnosed cases per 100,000 women and the standardized mortality rate of cervical cancer was 10.8 deaths per 100,000 women, about 3 times higher than the European average.(2) Preventing 90% of all deaths caused by cervical cancer can be achieved by using the screening method "Pap-test", given that all the women of the target population participate to periodic testing under the condition that all the detected injuries to be traced, diagnosed and adequately treated.(3) Female population from rural areas is considered one of the most vulnerable populations in Romania.(4) Low income, lack of education and access to information and medical services, make women from rural areas a population with increased mortality risk due to cervical cancer.

PURPOSE

Assessing the knowledge level and the participation degree to the cervical cancer screening among the female population from the rural areas.

METHODS

This study is part of the descriptive, observational studies category, approached in cross manner. The study was based on the analysis of the female population particularities regarding the acceptability and addressability degree of cervical cancer screening. The target group included female gender population aged between 20 and 65 years old, registered on the family doctor's list in Viperești, Buzău County. Population selection was made on the basis of the following inclusion criteria: age between 20 and 65 years old; the lack of a confirmed cervical cancer diagnosis; women who are asymptomatic or without suggestive history for cervical pathology. Exclusion criteria were: women with congenital absence of the cervix or total hysterectomy as a result of benign or malignant diseases; age under 20 years and over 65 years old. After applying these criteria a group of 200 persons has been selected. The instrument used was a questionnaire, composed of 35 questions, of which 13 closed questions with single or multiple pre-set answer, 3 questions with open answer and 19 questions with mixed answers. The questionnaires were administered directly to persons from the target group; the length of time required for completion was about 15-20 minutes.

Processing and collected data analysis was performed using EpiInfo version 7.1.3 application.

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RESULTS

The demographic profile of the female population being studied highlights an average age of 37.53 years old, married status for 63.5%, the existence of at least one child in 76%. Also, the employed status for 40% of women, 58.5% with secondary and high school and a net monthly income up to 1500 Ron. For 77% of persons, the onset of sexual life was until the age of 20 years. In terms of the knowledge level regarding the cervical cancer, 25.6% of the interviewed population did not know how to identify if there were any clinical symptoms in the early stages of the disease. Erroneously, 48.7% consider that bleeding are the first sign of the disease. Only 50% of women have heard, at least once in their life about the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), the television being the main source of information for half of them. The prevention methods of cervical cancer as periodic gynaecological exam and screening test were rated as effective by over 55% of the studied population. Pap-test is known by 88% of the respondent persons, the main sources of information being personal obstetrics-gynaecology physician (55.7%), TV (45.5%) and print media (26.1%). However, only 34.5% of women have done this test. Next, we plan to highlight the connection between the group of age, level of education, monthly income and participation at the screening test. Thus, the greatest participation was recorded in the age group 35-39 years (figure no.1), among women with a monthly income of 500-800 Ron (figure no. 2) and those with secondary education and above (figure no. 3).

Figure no. 1. Relationship between screening test and age group

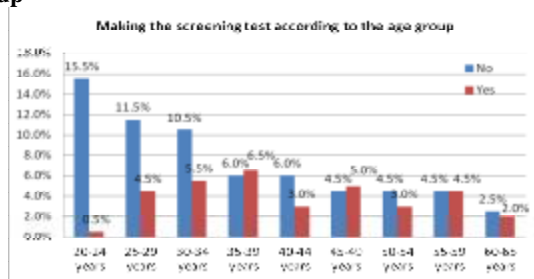


Figure no. 2. Relationship between screening test and monthly income

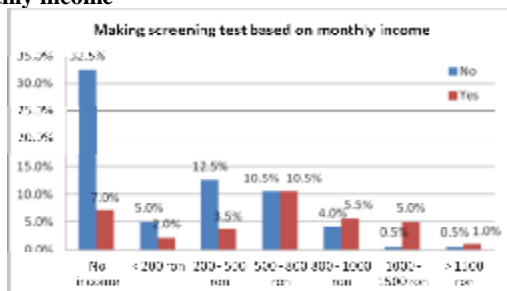
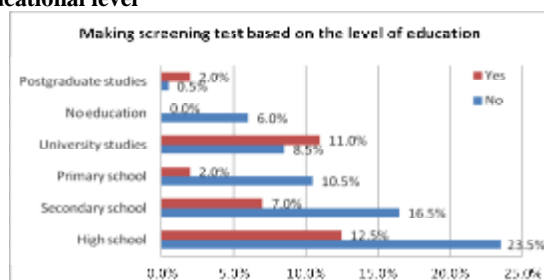


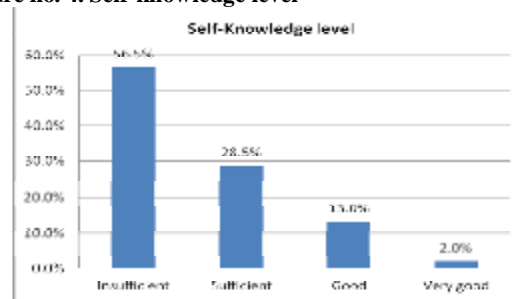
Figure no. 3. Relationship between screening test and educational level



Addressability to a specialist doctor in obstetrics-gynaecology is done for a preventive check-up, only 16.1% of those surveyed. The main reasons for which they did not present to the physician are: lack of information, lack of money, distance.

Self-assessment of the studied female population concerning the level of knowledge about cervical cancer and screening test showed that 85% of women were declared as "sufficiently" and "insufficiently" informed about these topics (figure no. 4).

Figure no. 4. Self-knowledge level



In terms of participation at the screening test, the lack of information is a major impediment for the studied female population. The obstetrics-gynaecology physician or the family doctor is considered as being the most trusted information source by 82% of women.

CONCLUSIONS

Cervical cancer and screening method "Pap-test" is a topic little known to the population from rural areas and for this reason, a small part of the population wants a screening method of prevention.

We recommend the development of an information-education programme for the rural female population, with the aim of increasing the addressability to the national programme of screening for cervical cancer.

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