

ABSTRACT

Background:

Cervical cancer, the most common cancer among women in Uganda is strongly linked to Human PapillomaVirus. Precancerous lesions can be detected by Papanicolau smear screening. Nurses, being the largest group of health workers, have an important role in promotion of cervical cancer screening.

Objectives:

To assess knowledge and attitudes of female nurses towards utilisation of cervical cancer screening services in Masaka hospital

Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study using questionnaires on 63 nurses. Data analysis was made by descriptive statistics.

RESULTS: All the 63 questionnaires were correctly completed and returned. Less than half of the nurses had adequate knowledge regarding cervical cancer screening. Less than half 47.6%(30/63) knew that a health worker recommends a woman to go for pap smear at least every year by age 18 or when they become sexually active, whichever occurs first and 22%(14/63) were not aware of the existence screening services at Masaka hospital. Only 22% had ever undergone a pap smear and none of them had it done regularly. While 28.6% gave reasons for not screening like; just planning to do it, no services nearby, the test is unpleasant and embarrassing, never taken it as a serious matter in life, can't give any reason why they fail to go for the check, fear of the check, no need to check. 34.7% expressed not having enough free time/busy schedule as the major reason for not undertaking cervical cancer screening, 26.5% felt they were not likely candidates for cancer of the cervix. A few were afraid of results.

CONCLUSION: Knowledge of cervical cancer screening services among female nurses in Uganda is not satisfactorily good while uptake rate is very poor. The majority did not know screening intervals facts about pap smear. Most nurses (88%) had never had a Pap smear examination. It's unlikely that these nurses would feel motivated to screen others or advise them accordingly. Therefore; there is need to further educate the nurses who will play a major role in enlightening the public on the availability and need for cervical screening services.