

ABSTRACT

Background: Cervical cancer is a public health issue that kills at least 250 000 women every year: 80% of women who die come from low and middle-income countries like Uganda. (WHO Report of the GAVI–UNFPA 2009).

Broad objective: To identify the factors which influence the utilization of cancer screening services among women of child bearing age

Methods: This was a cross sectional descriptive study design which was conducted in kisugu parish found in Makindye Division Kampala district. It included women of childbearing age from the ages of 15 - 49 years in the community of Kisugu parish who were purposively selected from households. The researcher developed a structured, precoded and pretested questionnaire and interviewed 369 WCBA to collect quantitative data from WCBA of age 15-49 years. SPSS statistical package was used in the data analysis.

Results: The majority of the 369 included participants were with an education mostly up to primary level. Knowledge about the importance of the Pap smear, presence of cancer screening services, was adequate (64.7% and 53.3%, respectively) but awareness of cervical cancer risk factors, causes, signs and symptoms was quite low. The most frequent reasons for avoiding Pap smear screening were fear of pain associated with vaginal examination (7%), embarrassment (53.3%), and cost of the procedure (22%). Knowledge factors associated with cervical cancer, barrier to utilizing screening services were the most significant followed by health system factors which did not greatly influence utilization of screening services except attitude of health workers and presence of screening services at the health facility. **Conclusion:** If we can improve the knowledge and attitudes about Pap smear cervical cancer screening in both the subjects and the health care providers, the health workers should be able to readily provide appropriate and accurate information to the population to motivate the general population to join screening programs.