

An Ethnographic Study of Cervical Cancer Among Women in Rural Kenya: Is there a Folk Causal Model? International Journal of Gynecological Cancer, Vol. 15: 1049-1059

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Abstract:

This article assesses knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding cervical cancer among rural women of Kenya. One hundred and sixty women (mean age 37.9 years) who sought various health care services at Tigoni subdistrict hospital, Limuru, Kenya, were interviewed using a semi structured questionnaire. In addition, three focus group discussions (25 participants) were held, five case narratives recorded, and a free list of cervical cancer risk factors obtained from a group of 41 women respondents. All women were aged between 20 and 50 years. About 40% knew cervical cancer, although many still lack factual information. A history of sexually transmitted diseases (61.5%), multiple sexual partners (51.2%), and contraceptive use (33%) were identified as risk factors. Other factors mentioned include smoking, abortion, and poor hygiene standards. High parity, early sexual debut, and pregnancy were not readily mentioned as risk factors. We propose a folk causal model to explain the link between these factors and cervical cancer. Lack of knowledge constrains utilization of screening services offered at the clinics. Consequently, respondents support educating women as a way to tackling issues on cervical cancer. It is recommended that an integrated reproductive health program that addresses comprehensively women's health concerns be put in place