

ABSTRACT

Background: Cancer of the cervix remains a preventable yet leading cause of cancer related death in women especially from the developing countries. Most patients in these countries present late with advanced inoperable cervical cancer. The aim of treatment in such cases is to improve the quality of lives patients lead.

Objective: To assess the quality of life of patients undergoing radiotherapy for inoperable cervical cancer at Kenyatta National Hospital.

Design: A cross-sectional study.

Setting: The radiotherapy department, Kenyatta National Hospital.

Results: The study population comprised one hundred fifty two patients undergoing radiotherapy for inoperable cervical cancer at Kenyatta National Hospital. Aged between 22-80 years they were predominantly rural (84.2%) residents and mainly peasants (55.2%). The diagnosis of cervical cancer was made after onset of symptoms in majority (85.5%) of the respondents and mostly in the provincial and district or sub district hospitals (75.2%). All aspects of functions of patients were reduced with many suffering various symptoms. The overall health and quality of life of the patients was generally poor with very low scores compared to the European organization for the research and treatment of cancer (EORTC) reference values. Most patients were willing to participate in programmes aimed at improving their quality of life and cervical cancer prevention programmes in general.

Conclusions: The quality of life and health of patients with inoperable cervical cancer undergoing radiotherapy is poor and needs urgent attention. It is therefore recommended that quality of life studies be incorporated in all treatments for gynecological malignancies especially cervical cancer.