

Knowledge and acceptability of pap smears, self-sampling and HPV vaccination among adult women in Kenya.

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Abstract

Our study aimed to assess adult women's knowledge of human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer, and characterize their attitudes towards potential screening and prevention strategies. **METHODS:** Women were participants of an HIV-discordant couples cohort in Nairobi, Kenya. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to obtain information on sociodemographic status, and sexual and medical history at baseline and on knowledge and attitudes towards Pap smears, self-sampling, and HPV vaccination at study exit. **RESULTS:** Only 14% of the 409 women (67% HIV-positive; median age 29 years) had ever had a Pap smear prior to study enrollment and very few women had ever heard of HPV (18%). Although most women knew that Pap smears detect cervical cancer (69%), very few knew that routine Pap screening is the main way to prevent ICC (18%). Most women reported a high level of cultural acceptability for Pap smear screening and a low level of physical discomfort during Pap smear collection. In addition, over 80% of women reported that they would feel comfortable using a self-sampling device (82%) and would prefer at-home sample collection (84%). Nearly all women (94%) reported willingness to be vaccinated to prevent cervical cancer if offered at no or low cost. **CONCLUSIONS:** These findings highlight the need to educate women on routine use of Pap smears in the prevention of cervical cancer and demonstrate that vaccination and self-sampling would be acceptable modalities for cervical cancer prevention and screening.