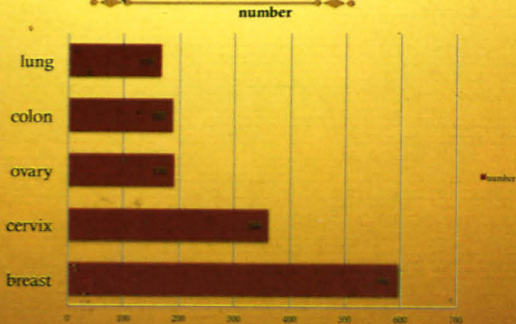


Bato do Puun Pagaganakan Help To Prevent Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer can be prevented. The reason for this is because cervical cancer develops very slowly and a recent vaccination against cervical cancer has been developed. Cervical cancer starts as a precancerous form called dysplasia. The normal cells become abnormal or turn into precancerous condition and will take years before it changes into cancerous cells. The abnormal cells can be detected by obtaining a sample from the cervix using a test called Pap smear. The precancerous condition of cervical cancer is 100% treatable. Most women who are diagnosed with cervical cancer today usually have not had regular Pap smears or they have not followed up on abnormal Pap smear results.

Pap smear or the Papanicolaou test was invented by a Greek doctor called Georgios Papanicolaou in 1928 but it was only widely accepted in 1943. Since then Pap smear has become a screening test for precancerous detection of cervical cancer. In developed countries with a well-run-screening program for cervical cancer, 80% of the cervical cancers detected are curable because of early detection. In Malaysia, Pap smear screening has been available since 1960s, yet cervical cancer remains the second most common cancer in women after breast cancer. In Sabah, cervical cancer is the second commonest cancer in women, but the sad fact is that more than 80% of these reported cases are in advanced stage. Advanced cancer in general is more difficult to treat and the chance of cure is small although there are treatments available for these cancers.

Female cancer in Sabah
(2006-2009)



considered as low-risk HPVs. HPV type 16 and 18 are high-risk type and is responsible for about 70% of cervical cancer. HPV type 6 and HPV type 11 causes genital warts. Worldwide, HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in adults. More than 80% of American women will have contracted at least one strain of HPV by age fifty. HPV infection can be detected by doing HPV-DNA study on sample taken from the cervix.

Professor Ian Hector Frazer invented the vaccine against HPV-16, HPV-18, HPV-6 and HPV-11. The vaccine was approved in 2006 by the Australian and US regulatory bodies. Currently there are two vaccines in the market: Gardasil and Cervarix. Both vaccines protect against the high-risk oncogenic HPVs. Gardasil also protects against HPV-6 and HPV-11 that cause 90% of genital warts.

The World Health Organization (WHO), as well as public health officials in Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States recommend vaccination of young women against HPV to prevent cervical cancer, and to reduce the number of treatments for precancerous condition of cervical cancer. In Malaysia free HPV immunization to 13 year old girls are offered since 2010. Generally the cervical cancer vaccine is recommended for girls and boys ages 11 to 12, although it may be given as early as at age 9. It is important to receive the vaccine before sexual contact and exposure to HPV. The vaccine may not be as effective once one is infected with HPV.

Other factors that can increase risk of cervical cancer are the following:

- Many sexual partners. The greater number of sexual partner and partner's sexual partners the greater chance of acquiring HPV.

- Early sexual activity. The earlier one starts sexual activity or having sex before age 18 increases risk of HPV.
- Other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Having other STI such as chlamydia,

gonorrhoea, syphilis or HIV/AIDS increases the risk of HPV.

- A weak immune system. Most women who are infected with HPV never develop cervical cancer, the HPV spontaneously disappears. However, if one's immune system is weak, the HPV will most likely cause cervical cancer.
- Cigarette smoking. Smoking can weaken the immune system and HPV infection may work together to cause cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer in the early stage usually does not show any symptoms. Symptoms that may occur can include:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding between periods, after intercourse, or after menopause
- Continuous vaginal discharge, which may be pale, watery, pink, brown, bloody, or foul-smelling
- Periods become heavier and last longer than usual
- Cervical cancer may spread to the bladder, intestines, lungs, and liver. Patients with cervical cancer do not usually have problems until the cancer is advanced and has spread. Symptoms of advanced cervical cancer may include:

- Back pain
- Bone pain or fractures
- Fatigue
- Leaking of urine or faeces from the vagina
- Leg pain
- Loss of appetite
- Pelvic pain
- Single swollen leg
- Weight loss

Cervical cancer can be prevented. Help to prevent cervical cancer by:

1. Having a pap smear
2. Get vaccinated with HPV vaccine
3. Tell others to help prevent cervical cancer

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