

Knowledge and Attitude toward Cervical Cancer Screening of Marketers (Women) at Chiwempala Market in Chingola, Copperbelt, Zambia

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Abstract

Background: Cervical cancer is a cancer of the cervix. It is usually asymptomatic in the early stages but claims many lives once in progression. Literature shows that it remains to be a public health problem because of its morbidity and the mortality rates especially in the developing countries. According to literature lack of knowledge on the cervical cancer screening program has contributed to the rise in the incidence of the disease. Zambia has the world's second highest annual incidence and mortality rates. However there is scant information in studies conducted to assess the level of knowledge on cervical cancer.

Method: A cross sectional study was conducted in Chingola (Chiwempala market) among 200 women to assess the level of knowledge and attitude towards cervical cancer screening. A systematic random sampling was used and information was only collected from women that were willing to participate. The quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical package for social science. The aim of this study was to determine the knowledge and the attitude that the marketers have towards the screening program. This was in order to ascertain whether the lack of knowledge has a role to play in the rising prevalence of cervical cancer. Furthermore, it was also help determine the attitude that women have towards the screening program.

Results: Among the 200 women that were interviewed, 87% had heard about cervical cancer and 13% had never heard of it. Furthermore 82.5% had heard of cervical cancer screening while 17.5% had never heard about it. However, the study reviewed that only 25% had been screened before and the remaining 75% had never been screened. Amongst the women that had never been screened 18% of the women said their reason for not going for screening was lack of time as they were always busy with their businesses. However, 57.5% attested their not being screened to lack of proper knowledge. The results in this study revealed that most women had merely heard the terms "cervical cancer screening", but however had inadequate knowledge about cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening.

Recommendation: This therefore is an indication that despite the majority of these women having heard about cervical cancer, very few had a clear understanding of what it really is. Thus an initiative has to be made were sensitization on cervical cancer and cervical screening should be done in smaller groups. This will enable them have a better understanding. Nevertheless, the results from this research may have been limited by the fact that only marketers were targeted. Therefore there is need for more researches on the same topic to be conducted among different classes of women.

Keywords: Cervical cancer; Screening; Knowledge; Attitude

Introduction

Cervical cancers are basically cancers of the cervix. They normally start by normal cells of the cervix developing into pre-cancerous cells, and then these cells eventually develop into cancer. This can take several years or its can occur within a year. These cancers are usually seen in women who have never had a pap smear or been screened for many years. Cervical cancer is asymptomatic, and the presenting complaints are usually unexpected bleeding and painful coitus [1]. Among women worldwide, cervical cancer is the second common, and it is estimated yearly that 528 000 new cases and 266 000 deaths are recorded. Of this estimated number, 85% cases and 87% deaths occur in women living in low and middle class income countries [2].

Furthermore, over quarter of a million lives are lost because of cervical cancer annually [3].

Zambia a country with a population of over 13 million has the world's second highest annual cervical cancer incidence and mortality [4]. However, the magnitude of this problem has not been prioritized as compared to competing problems such as, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This is due to a number of causes and these include, poor awareness, lack of finances and lack of epidemiological data [3-5].

Cervical cancer being a contributor to the mortality rate in women, It is necessary that these women obtain knowledge on this disease and the importance of cervical cancer screening. This study will aim at assessing the knowledge and attitude of marketers as regards to cervical cancer screening. This study will act as a baseline for other larger studies to be conducted particularly in Chingola and thereafter polices can be formulated which will advocate for the education of

marketers and even the general public on the importance of not only being screened but being screened early for cervical cancer. This will in turn help in the control of the on incidence of cervical cancer.

Methods

Study design and site

The present study was conducted at Chiwempala market, which is a market located in Chingola along Chiwempala road in a compound known as Chiwempala. It is one of the large markets in Chingola where most of the buying and selling is done. In the current study a cross sectional study was conducted at Chiwempala Market in Chingola, Zambia. This was due to the fact that its aim was to identify and quantify the distribution of certain variables in a study population at any point in time.

Data collection

Data was collected using questionnaires that were given to all the participants. And it was then analyzed using SPSS version 21.

Results and Discussion

The current study enrolled 200 participants of which the majority were between the age group of 20-29 with a frequency of 65(32.5%) and the minority were found to be above 60 years, these had a frequency of 8(4%). Furthermore, the study showed that 82(41%) were single, 92(46%) were married and 26(13%) were widows. According to the study 121(60.5%) had secondary attained level education and only 6(3%) had attained tertiary education level (Table 1).

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage	
Age; 20-29 >60	65	32.5	
	8	4	
Marital status; Single	82	41	
	Married	92	46
	Widow	26	13
Education level; Illiterate	14	7	
	Primary	59	29.5
	Secondary	121	60.5
Tertiary	6	3	

Table 1: Social demographics

The Figure 1 shows the number of women in this study that reported to have had heard about cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening. From the 200 women that were interviewed 87% (174) mentioned that they had heard about cervical cancer, while the remaining 13% (26) had never heard about cervical cancer. Furthermore 82.5% (165) reported to have heard of cervical cancer screening and 17.5% (35) had never heard about it.

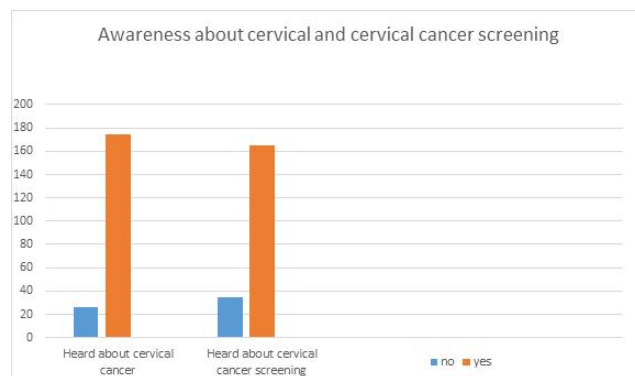


Figure 1: Description of the sample by number of women that had been screened.

Additionally, it shows the grading knowledge level based on the questions that assessed knowledge in this study. The total numbers of questions on Knowledge were 9, a mark of zero out of nine was considered as no knowledge, a mark between 1-4 was considered as poor knowledge, a mark between 5-7 was considered as average knowledge and finally a mark between 7-9 was considered as good knowledge. The table shows that 8.5% (17) had absolutely no knowledge on cervical cancer screening, 15% (30) had poor knowledge on cervical cancer, 64.0% (128) had average knowledge and 12.5% (25) had good knowledge on cervical cancer screening.

In this current study, 200 participants were enrolled and among these, 82.5% had heard about cervical cancer screening, while 17.5% had never heard about it. Furthermore, it was reported that, 13% had never heard about cervical cancer while 87% had heard about it. Contrary to these findings, studies done in other countries under the same topic showed that most of the women had not heard about cervical cancer. A study that was done among the women in Kisumu, Kenya revealed that 91% of the 388 surveyed women had never heard about cervical cancer whereas 29% had heard about it [6]. Additionally Opoku et al conducted a study in Northern Ghana and it was revealed that 66.7% had never heard of cervical. Another study among women in Southern Ghana, showed 68.4% of the women had never heard about cervical cancer. A similar study conducted in Zimbabwe revealed that 81% of the surveyed women had no previous awareness of cervical cancer screening [7]. As compared to other studies therefore, the women that had prior awareness about cervical cancer in this current study are more than those in other studies.

In the present study, the knowledge on cervical cancer screening was assessed by 9 questions and the following grading system was used. A score of 0 was considered as absolutely no knowledge, a score between 1 to 4 was considered as poor knowledge, a grade of 5 to 7 was considered as average knowledge and a finally a grade of 8 to 9 (>7) was considered to be good knowledge. This grading system gave the following findings; 8.5% had absolutely no knowledge, 15% had poor knowledge, 64% had average knowledge and 12% had good knowledge. Furthermore the findings in this study revealed that 57.5% of the women were not screened because they had inadequate knowledge or absolutely no knowledge, while 18% attested their not being screened to lack of time as they were too busy with their businesses. And of course the remaining 24.5% were an exception as they had already been screened for the disease (cervical cancer). Similarly, a study was conducted on the knowledge of cervical cancer in low and middle income countries and it was also reported that lack or limited information on the disease and lack of knowledge on the

aspect of preventive health care are barriers to cervical cancer prevention (Binghon A et al 2003). From another study done in Ouagadougou, it was concluded that the knowledge on cervical cancer was limited and the rate of screening was also low [7]. Additionally, in a study carried out among the Kenyan women, lack of cervical cancer screening awareness was found to be one of the challenges hindering women from getting screened for cervical cancer [8]. A study I carried out in Ethiopia also showed that there was also low awareness on the available screening programs as well as the disease itself [5]. This therefore cements the fact the major reason why most women are not screened for cervical cancer is inadequate information on both cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening. This is so because, when they were asked whether they were willing to get screened if someone explained to them what cervical cancer was and also what screening was all about, 67% stated that they would go for screening, however 9% reported that even if they had enough information about the disease and the screening programs they still would not be willing to get screened. Furthermore 87% stated that they felt that it mattered for one to get screened while 2% of the participants mentioned that it did not matter, the remaining 11% said they did not know whether it mattered or not. These results however, are in contrast to another study that was conducted right here in Zambia (though the province or town was not stated), that revealed that the participants (women) alluded to the fact that the disease was located in the female genitalia and it was association with acts or behaviors that are condemned by the society which are also related to HIV/AIDS. It was therefore clear that women who had such a mindset would not be willing to go for cervical cancer screening [9,10].

Conclusion

The current study aimed at assessing the knowledge and attitude that the women trading at Chiwempala Market in Chingola had towards cervical cancer screened. It also aimed at finding out whether the reason why women were not getting screened was due to lack of knowledge. It was discovered that from 200 participants, 82.5% had heard about cervical cancer screening, while 17.5% had never heard about it. Despite this only 25% had been screened while 75% had never been screened, further assessment on knowledge revealed that 8.5% had absolutely no knowledge and 64% had average knowledge and 12.5% cervical cancer screening. From these results it is therefore clear that the majority of the participants had inadequate knowledge on both cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening. It was also revealed that 57.5% did not go for screening because they had inadequate knowledge while 18% simply had no time and the 24.5% had already been screened.

Limitation

In this study, most women have heard about cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening however they do not have enough

knowledge. I therefore recommend that the awareness programs should not be done among multitudes of people but rather small groups should be formed were this women are properly educated about this disease in a language that they best understand. Furthermore, more studies on the same subject should be conducted in different classes of ladies. As this will help identify the reason for the rising incident in cervical cancer.

This study may have however been limited by time factor as little time was given for data collection therefore there could have been some errors. Due to the same factor, the initial sample size of 236, could not be met thus information was only collected from 200 participants.

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