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Awareness and Knowledge of Cervical Cancer and Its Prevention amongst Nursing Staff in a Tertiary Care Hospital

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I. Introduction

Cervical cancer ranks as the fourth most common cancer in women worldwide [1]. There were an estimated 528,000 new cases and 266,000 deaths from cervical cancer in 2012, and around 85% of these occurred in less developed regions [1]. Cervical cancer is mainly caused by persistent infection with certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV types 16 and 18 are responsible for approximately 70% of cervical cancer cases in all countries around the world [2]. Other risk factors include onset of intercourse before 20 years old, having multiple sexual partners, and smoking [3,4]. Cervical cancer is responsible for a heavy economic and social burden, and its incidence and mortality have increased from 2003 to 2010 in China [5]. It is estimated that 98,900 new cancer cases and 30,500 cancer deaths occurred in China in 2015 alone(6). Cervical cancer screening has been consistently shown to be effective in reducing the incidence rate or the occurrence of new cervical cancer cases and mortality from cervical cancer(7). However, cervical screening attendance rates are still far from satisfactory in many countries.(8-11)

Cervical cancer is a deadly disease once it reaches the invasive stages, but out of all the female genital tract cancers, it is the only preventable cancer if detected at its early stages. Population-based screening with Pap smear is an important secondary preventive measure for cervical cancer that leads to a high-cure rate among cervical cancer patients. Nurses and the female medical students can provide health promotion counselling to the patients they serve in their day-to-day practice. They can fulfil a key role in health promotion and disease prevention, and they are in an ideal position to provide health education to young girls and women. It is necessary to make the nursing staff aware about cervical cancer, who can impart knowledge regarding cervical cancer and its prevention to the general public. This study was carried out among the nursing staff and the female medical students in order to assess their knowledge regarding cervical cancer.

Objective of the study:
To assess the awareness and knowledge on cervical cancer among medical and paramedical staff and students

II. Materials And Methodology

This study was conducted at K S Hegde Medical Academy and Charitable Hospital, Deralakatte, Mangalore. The study included 100 subjects which includes medical and paramedical staff and students. First of all consent was taken from them using the informed consent provided along with this following which they were provided with a questionnaire which is comprised of questions regarding cervical cancer and its screening
Confidentiality was assured to the subject to get their cooperation and purpose of study was explained
Completed questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge on cervical cancer.
The results were tabulated & analyzed statistically.
The data collected was as follows
1] Awareness about cervical cancer
2]Level of knowledge: poor ,average, good
3] Awareness about early signs of cervical cancer- abnormal bleeding, smelling vaginal discharge, painful menstruation
4] Awareness of vaccine against cervical cancer

5] Awareness about PAP smear test

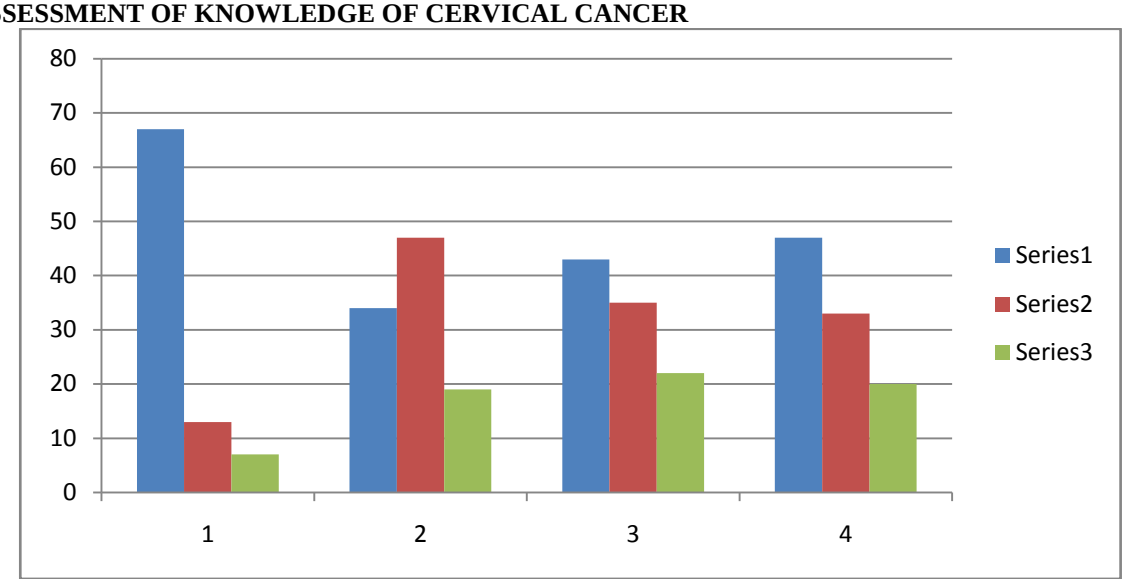
III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted on 100 female nursing staff, aged above 21years, working at K S Hegde Medical Academy, Mangalore. Awareness and knowledge of cervical cancer was assessed among them.

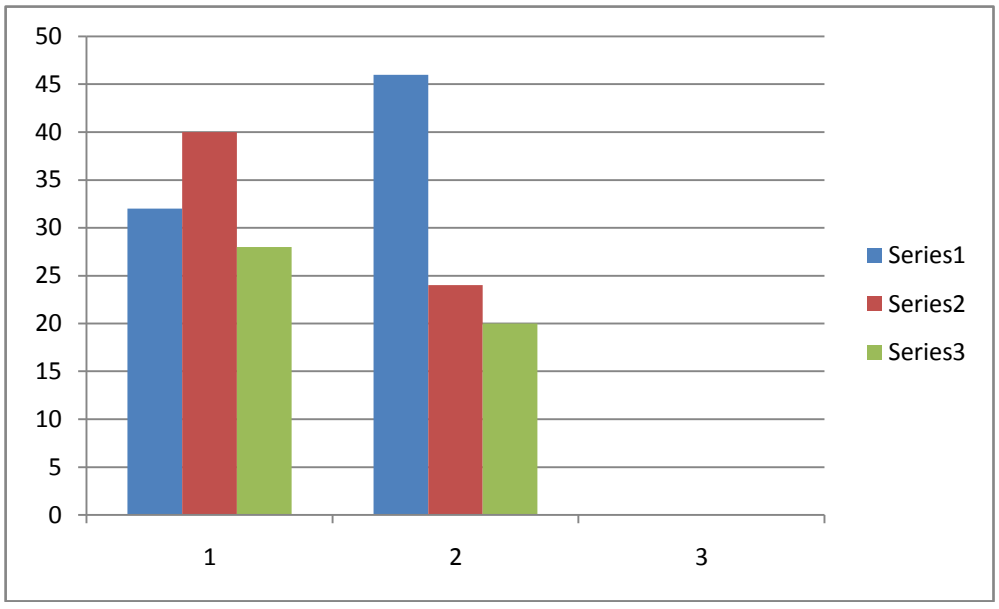
According to the answers obtained to the questionnaire, 67% had heard of cervical cancer previously, 13% were not aware of cervical cancer and 7% haven't heard of it. 34% were aware that cervical cancer is a terminal illness, 47% were not aware and 19% didn't know. 43% were aware of the fact that cervical cancer can be associated with infection, 35% were not aware and 20% didn't know about it.

47% were aware about significant methods to reduce risk of this disease, 33% were not aware and 20% didn't know about it.

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE OF CERVICAL CANCER

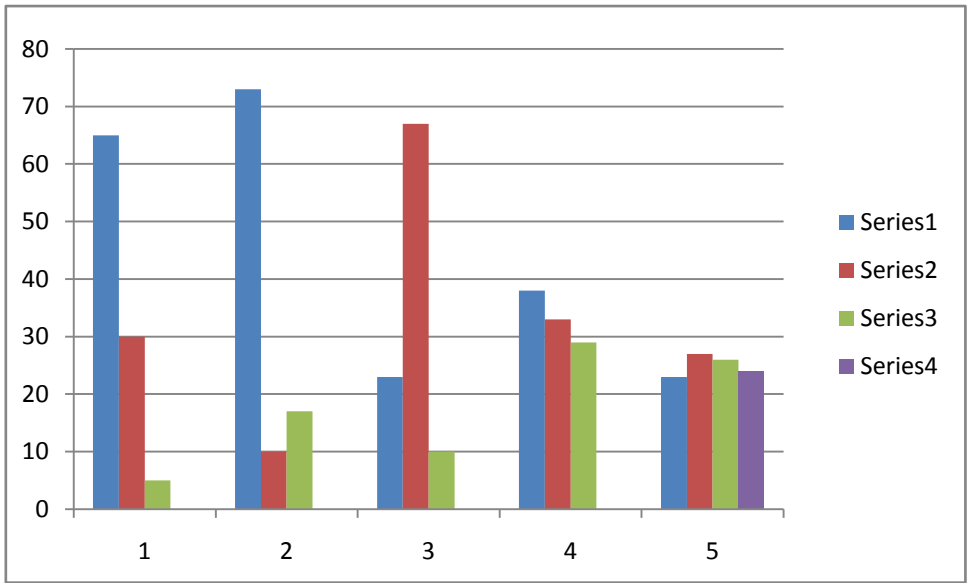


RISK FACTORS AND ESTIMATED OCCURENCE OF DISEASE



Various risk factors such as HPV infection, HIV infection, miscarriages and abortions multiple sexual partners, large number of pregnancies, hormonal contraceptives and use of drugs were scored between 1 to 5[total 7 to 40] based on likert scale. 32% scored between 40 and 20 ,40% between 20 and 10 and 28% below 10.and 46% thinks that diet rich in antioxidants and vitamin supplements could reduce risks while other 30% thinks of doing physical exercise and 24% thinks adequate sleep could reduce the risks.

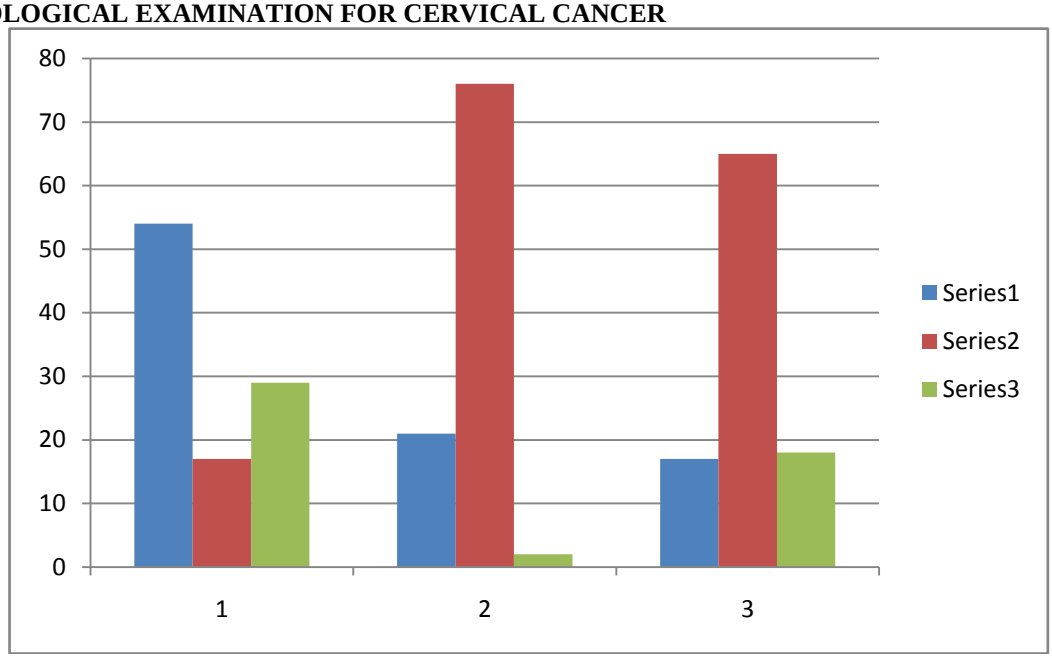
SYMPTOMS OF CERVICAL CANCER AND VACCINE AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER



Awareness of vaccine against cervical cancer was assessed and it was found that 65% were aware of it, 30% were not aware and 5% didn't know about it. Also 73% were aware of the fact that it is available in India 10% did not know and 17% were not aware of it. 23% thinks that the vaccine available is free of cost, 67% are aware that it is not free and 10% didn't know about it. 38% thinks that best age to get vaccinated is 15-25years, 29% thinks that it is above 45 years and 33% between 15 and 25years.

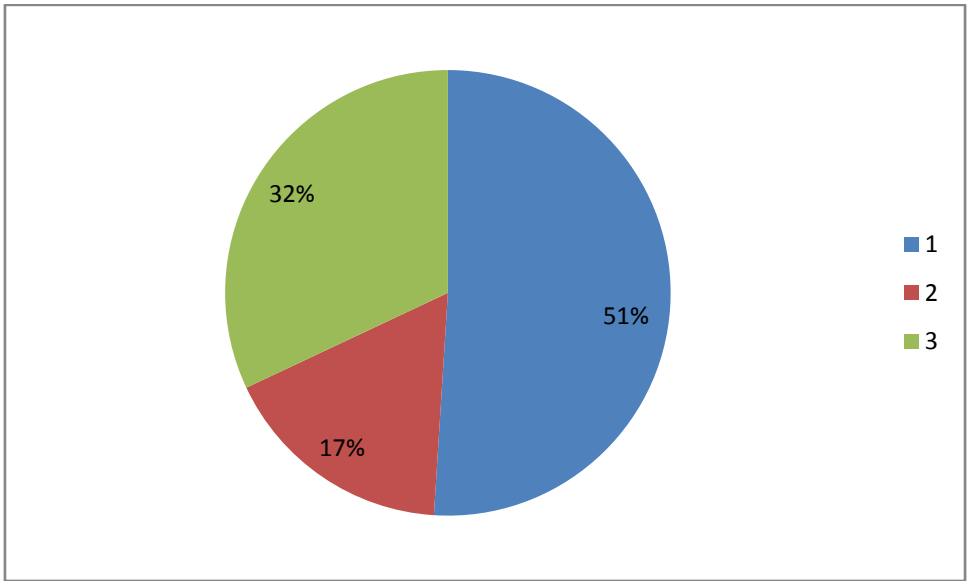
Knowledge of symptoms associated with cervical cancer were assesses and 23% thinks irregular and painful menstruation,27% smelling vaginal discharge ,26%blood stained mucus and 24%high grade fever.

CYTOLOGICAL EXAMINATION FOR CERVICAL CANCER



Awareness about cytological examination for cervical examination was assessed and it was noted that 54% were aware of it, while 17% were not aware , 29% didn't know about it . And 21% thinks that PAP smear test is painful, 76% were aware that it is not painful and 2% didn't know about it. 17% thinks that it is sufficient to do the test only once to eliminate risk 18% didn't know about it and 65% were aware that it doesn't suffice.

AWARENESS AND ASSESSMENT OF CERVICAL CANCER



From the given data, 51% appears to have good knowledge , 32% average knowledge and 17% had poor knowledge of cervical cancer

IV. Discussion

Every year more than 2,70,000 women die from cervical cancer, more than 85% of these deaths are in low and middle income countries. Cervical cancer is caused by sexually-acquired infection with Human papillomavirus (HPV). Most people are infected with HPV shortly after onset of sexual activity.

This study is aimed at creating awareness of the risk and consequences of the cervical cancer amongst the study population. As it is known carcinoma cervix is one of the leading cause of death amongst females. Not the general public but even the health professionals are unaware of the importancve of screening for carcinoma cervix. Apart from this, this study would help the general public indirectly where the nursing staff and the medical students would pass on the knowledge about screening for carcinoma cervix and create awareness and hence contributing to the betterment of health of the people. Awareness and knowledge of cervical cancer was assessed among them.

67% had heard of cervical cancer previously, 13% were not aware of cervical cancer and 7% haven't heard of it. 34% were aware that cervical cancer is a terminal illness, 47% were not aware and 19% didn't know. 43% were aware of the fact that cervical cancer can be associated with infection, 35% were not aware and 20% didn't know about it.

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V. Conclusion

From the study conducted among nursing staffs we can conclude that 51.37% appears to have good knowledge, 32% average knowledge and 16.67% poor knowledge of cervical cancer.

Nurses can provide health promotion counseling to the patients they serve in their day-to-day practice. They can fulfill a key role in health promotion and disease prevention, and they are in an ideal position to provide health education to young girls and women. It is necessary to make the nursing staff aware about cervical cancer, who can impart knowledge regarding cervical cancer and its prevention to the general public.

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