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SCREENING FOR PREMALIGNANT LESIONS OF THE CERVIX: DETERMINANTS OF PATIENTS' PRACTICES.

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Introduction.

- Carcinoma of the cervix is the commonest genital tract malignancy in developing countries.
- The observed difference in its incidence in varying population reflects availability of effective pre-malignant screening programmes.
- However, poor practices among the target population can be a major contributor to ineffectiveness of such programmes.
- A study to assess the determinants of the practices of patients presenting for Pap smear test was conducted.

Objectives

- To determine the practices of clients utilising Pap smear test in a Tertiary hospital.
- To determine the personnel referring for Pap smear.
- To correlate their practices with the source of referral.

Methodology.

- Cross sectional using a self administered structured questionnaire among consenting patients at the cervical cytology room of Obs/Gynae dept. UCH.
- The study was conducted 1st of August, 2003 and 31st January, 2004.
- The responses were coded and entered into a computer and frequency tables generated using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Results.

- Ninety –seven of 120 questionnaires were found suitable for analysis.
- The mean age of the respondent was 43.45 years (SD: 9.3 years).
- 77.3% had at least secondary education.
- Only 35.1% of the respondents had Pap smear test before but at varying intervals ranging from 6 months to 13 years.
- Annual Screening interval was suggested by 57.7% of the respondents, two yearly by 6.2%, 3-5 yearly by 3.1% while 33% suggested varying intervals from one to nine months.
- Referral of 77.4% of the respondents was by health care providers.

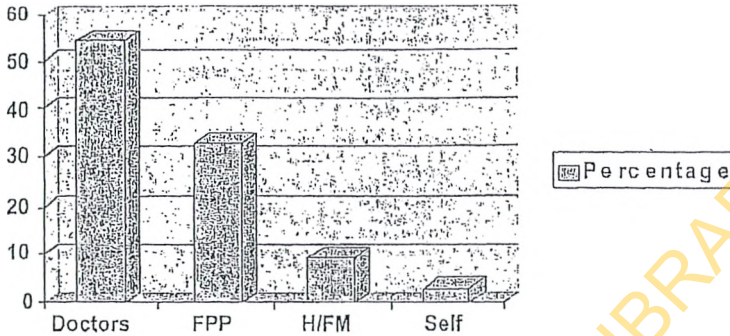
TABLE 1- Demographical data of respondents.

Demography	Number	Percentage
Mean Age	43.45 years (SD:9.29)	
Marital Status:		
Single	2	2.1%
Married	92	94.8%
Widowed	3	3.1%
Educational Level:		
Primary	14	14.5%
Secondary	26	26.8%
Post-secondary	49	50.5%
No formal education	8	8.2%
Tribe:		
Yoruba	80	82.5%
Igbo	9	9.3%
Hausa	0	0.0%
Others	8	8.2%

TABLE 2- Awareness and practices of Pap Smear by respondents.

	Number	Percentage
1. Awareness of Pap smear		
Yes	54	55.7%
No	41	42.3%
Not sure	2	2.0%
2. Awareness of what Pap smear screens for		
Yes	34	35.1%
No	45	46.4%
Not sure	18	18.6%
3. Awareness of frequency of Pap smear test		
Every year	56	57.7%
Every two years	6	6.2%
Every three years	1	1.0%
Every four years	2	2.1%
Others (1-9 months)	33	33.9%
4. Have had Pap smear test in the past		
Yes	34	35.1%
No	61	62.6%
No response	1	1.0%

Fig. 1 – Personnel Referring Respondents for Pap Smear Test



Key:

FPP – Family planning providers

H/FM – Husband/family members

Conclusion

- This study showed that:
 - the practices of screening for Pre-malignant lesions of the cervix was poor among these respondents.
 - This was demonstrated by poor knowledge of the principle of Pap smear test despite being referred by health care personnel.
- This might be a reflection of the quality of information provided by the health care providers who referred most of the patients.
- To this end adequate and appropriate information on health issues, including Papanicolaou, smear by healthcare providers is thus recommended.