



Removing Global Barriers to Cervical Cancer Prevention and Moving Towards Elimination

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Commentary

Cervical cancer is a leading cause of cancer death among women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). In 2012, an estimated 528,000 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 266,000 women died from the disease. This represents a 20% increase in the number of women diagnosed with cervical cancer in LMICs since 2008. In 2012, 50% of women diagnosed with cervical cancer in LMICs were aged 15–44 years, compared with 30% in 2008. The burden of cervical cancer is increasing in LMICs, and this is largely due to the increasing incidence of high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) infections. HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer, and 99.7% of cervical cancer cases are caused by HPV. HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection, and it is estimated that 80% of sexually active people will be infected with HPV at some point in their lives. HPV infection is often asymptomatic, and it can take many years for HPV infection to progress to cervical cancer. This is why early detection and treatment of HPV infection is crucial for preventing cervical cancer. HPV testing and vaccination are the most effective ways to prevent cervical cancer. HPV testing can detect HPV infection before it causes cervical cancer, and vaccination can prevent HPV infection. HPV testing and vaccination are highly cost-effective interventions, and they can significantly reduce the burden of cervical cancer in LMICs. However, there are several barriers to the widespread implementation of HPV testing and vaccination in LMICs. These barriers include lack of awareness, limited access to services, and high costs. To overcome these barriers, governments and the private sector need to invest in cervical cancer prevention and control programs. This includes increasing awareness of cervical cancer and its prevention, improving access to HPV testing and vaccination services, and reducing the costs of these services. By removing these barriers, we can move towards the elimination of cervical cancer in LMICs.

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1. World Health Organization. (2016). *Global strategy for the elimination of cervical cancer: a WHO-led effort to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem of global dimensions*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
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