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Awareness and utilization of cervical cancer screening services among women in selected rural communities in IFE east local government, Osun State, Nigeria

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Cervical cancer is a deadly disease that is preventable but has claimed the lives of many Nigerian women. This high fatality is due to its late presentation. It is believed that widespread screening of women for precursor lesion and early detection of the invasive disease can lead to a reduction in cervical cancer and cervical cancer deaths. The study assessed the knowledge and utilization of cervical cancer screening among women in selected rural communities in Ife East Local Government, Ile Ife. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive design in conducting the study and it was delimited to women. A sample size of 426 women who participated in the study were selected randomly from various rural communities. Semi structured questionnaires tested for validity and reliability was used to collect data, data was coded, entered into statistical package for social sciences version 17. Data were presented in frequency tables and cross tabulations and then Chi square and T-test were used to determine association among variables of interest at a level of significance of <0.05 . Results showed that the mean age of the respondents was 41 ± 5 years; the women who participated in the study were aware of cervical cancer (77%) but were not aware of papanicolaou smear as the screening test for cervical cancer (62.9%). Above average (54.5%) of the respondents had a fair knowledge about cervical cancer and screening but only a few percentage (9.4%) reported to have done pap smear test before, identified barriers to the uptake of the test were finances, pain, lack of awareness, embarrassment. The study demonstrated a significant association between women's knowledge about cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening (results) and their age ($X^2=21.15$, $df=8$, $P=0.007$). There was also a significant difference in between illiterate and literate in their knowledge about cervical cancer and screening services ($p=0.027$). In conclusion, there is need to increase awareness on Papanicolaou smear as a method of screening and its importance in the prevention of cervical cancer. The government should also be sensitized to support women's participation by subsidizing the cost as cost remains a major challenge for women in utilizing the service.

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