

Awareness of Cervical Cancer in Mbeya Region

Pandahill Secondary School

Frederick Priscus Kachira and Makusalani Ole Kawanara



Abstract:

In our societies, there are cancer victims in one way or another and there has been a tendency of people (males and female) living with cancer without realizing it for a long period of time like 5 to 10 years and still it is a topic that *is not often discussed* in our societies so that most people are unaware of risks and prevention.

Our project's aim is to make young people and the rest aware of cancer, especially cervical cancer, as it is the most common for women in Tanzania caused by HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) which can be transmitted via intimate sexual contact and when it is left untreated it develops to warts or precancerous lesions of cervix, vulva and thus accounting for emergence of 85% cervical cancer cases on females and penis warts for males in low income countries which endangers reproduction and production ability of current generation.

Method:

Questionnaires: Questions were organized in order of age and gender. In total 241 questionnaires were prepared, supplied and answered by both students from Pandahill and Songwe Secondary Schools.

Interviews: Five doctors from four hospitals and four local health centers in Mbeya were interviewed.

Focused group discussion: Some weeks before, the questionnaires were filled, class-to-class discussions had been conducted at Pandahill from Form 1 to Form 6, i.e. a total of 28 classes. At Songwe Secondary questionnaires were answered first, followed by discussions. This paved a way to more research.

The methods were matched to the aims and the people asked so as they could be free to provide information of what they knew. Questionnaires were best for students, since they were free to write down what they know. For specialists the interview was chosen so as to ask personally for the knowledge to receive information about the real situation of cervical cancer. During the discussions, information was gathered from different points of views. Furthermore, it was the best way to reach a lot of people.

Results:

Pandahill Secondary School and Songwe Secondary School:

Our focus group discussion about cervical cancer with students of Pandahill showed that the majority of its students were not aware about it.

Afterwards we tested the knowledge of the students by using questionnaires. They showed that the majority of students (about 90%) know that cervical cancer is caused by HPV and that there are preventive measures like the use of condoms. Yet students are not aware of the vaccination program in Tanzania.

At Songwe Secondary School 54.44% of the students could not locate the cervix and they seem to have only partial knowledge about the ways of transmission and precaution of cervical cancer. More than one third of the students believed that sharing underwear can cause cervical cancer. The general attitude of students is that cervical cancer can be cured but they did not know the methods for that. Also 90.48% were not vaccinated against cervical cancer.

A comparison between the results of Pandahill and Songwe Secondary revealed that the students of Pandahill have more knowledge than Songwe secondary school about causes and prevention of cervical cancer as shown below:

Conclusions:

Basing on the efforts on cervical cancer awareness in Tanzania, our research explored awareness onto why people are infected, reducing risks, vaccination and if it is received and existing local methods of detecting cervical cancer.

As cervical cancer is the most common in Tanzania, it is important for our society to be aware and this will:

Prepare youths and the society to invest on health awareness habit since pre- adolescence stage to adulthood. Also to

influence the youth in acquiring vaccination, reducing risks of getting it and alerting the society about it as a sexual transmitted disease as the most unknown fact about it and assists the nation to be aware of the health education, youth's health status, thus be prepared on precautionary measures.

It is our hope that, our current and continuing research on cervical cancer might reduce victims in our families, communities and the future generation.

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