

Patient Education Regarding National Cervical Awareness Month

The number of women worldwide who will die from cervical cancer is projected to increase 25 percent by 2030. In the U.S. alone, an estimated 12,000 U.S. women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year.

And yet, with accessible vaccines and routine screenings, cervical cancer is a largely avoidable disease. January is National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, and a vital time to remind women to talk with their physicians about their cancer risks and their need for cervical cancer screening.

As a pathologist, I examine cells and tissues to diagnose disease, such as cervical cancer. Simple and effective screenings such as the Pap test and the high-risk HPV test have made cervical cancer one of the most preventable cancers. No woman should die from cervical cancer. And, with the approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the HPV vaccine is available to protect young people against this deadly disease. January is a good month for women to take inventory of their health, schedule screenings, and share this information with their mothers, sisters, aunts, and girlfriends. These simple steps can help all women lead healthier lives.

Patients can also ask if the laboratory examining their Pap test, high-risk HPV test and cervical biopsy tissue samples is accredited, and if their pathologist is board-certified. PCL Alverno laboratory is accredited by the College of American Pathologists (CAP) and all the pathologists are board-certified. Further, several pathologists are also board-certified in the subspecialty of cytopathology. Diagnostic correlation is performed between the cytology of the Pap test and the cervical tissue biopsy to insure accurate diagnosis and optimal patient care. Many of the hospitals that PCL Alverno serves also have multidisciplinary conferences to discuss the diagnosis and management of patients with all cancers, including cervical cancer—another example of the collaborative approach to patient care. Finally, patients can seek resources to help them understand their pathology reports, such as “How To Read Your Pathology Report” provided by CAP at cap.org.

<http://www.cap.org/ShowProperty?nodePath=/UCMCon/Contribution%20Folders/WebContent/pdf/how-to-read-pathology-report.pdf>

Kalisha A. Hill, M.D., M.B.A., FCAP, FASCP
Medical Director, Department of Pathology and Clinical Laboratory
Presence St. Mary's Hospital- Kankakee, IL



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