ORIGINAL ARTICLE
PAP SMEAR, AN IMPORTANT SCREENING TOOL TO DETECT PRECANCEROUS STAGE OF CARCINOMA OF CERVIX

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INTRODUCTION
Globally carcinoma (Ca.) of cervix is second most common cancer in women after breast carcinoma.1 In Pakistan, hospital based data shows that Ca. cervix is third most common cancer after breast and oral cancer.2 It can be prevented by screening every woman by Pap smear which is effective, cheap and easy to perform. However, this screening service is not always feasible in developing countries because cytology facilities are largely unavailable and are often costly at private hospitals.3,4

Most common risk factors of Ca. cervix are young age at first intercourse, multiple sexual partners, low socio-economic status and human papilloma infection. Incidence of Ca. cervix varies from country to country and is more frequent in the developing/under developed countries where literacy and socioeconomic status is low, hygiene is poor and women marry at young age.5 The value of cytological screening for cervical cancer has been found effective in countries where disease is more common.6

The objective of this study was to determine the frequency of abnormal Pap smear and role of Pap smear in detecting precancerous stage of Ca. cervix in women attending Gynaecology Outpatient Department.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
This descriptive study was conducted in Gynaecology Outpatient Department of Isra University Hospital, Hyderabad, Sind over a period of 3 years from Nov 2006 to Oct 2009. All women who presented in OPD with gynaecological complaints were included in the study. Pregnant women were excluded from the study. Pap smear was collected with an Aries spatula and relevant information was obtained from the patient’s record and recorded on pre-designed Performa. Slides were then sent to pathology department. Data were analysed through SPSS-15 and presented as frequency and percentage.

RESULTS: Total 981 women underwent Pap smear screening. Majority (63.3%) of the patients belonged to age group of 31–40 years. One hundred and eighty (18.34%) smears were normal and 792 (80.7%) were abnormal. Among these abnormal smears, 739 (75.33%) smears were inflammatory while 4 (0.40%) women had Ca in situ and 4 (0.40%) had squamous cell carcinoma.

Conclusion. Pap smear is an important screening tool to detect precancerous stage of carcinoma of cervix. It should be done periodically in all married and high risk women for early detection of a precancerous stage.

Keywords: Pap smear, inflammatory, cancer cervix, malignancy, gynaecological tumour, diagnosis

REFERENCES
1. Gulfareen pdf
DISCUSSION

Ca. cervix is one of the commonest gynaecological malignancies and can be prevented by routine screening of cervix by Pap smear. By identifying and treating its precancerous stage we can save the lives of many women. Pap smear screening is the best screening programme worldwide recommended for sexually active women. 

Results of our study showed that 18.34% had normal smear while 75.33% had inflammatory smear. In comparison to this, a study done in Karachi reported 30.55% normal smear and 60.44% inflammatory smears. Another study conducted by Khan et al showed that 22.7% women had normal smear while 55.3% had inflammatory smear. In our study, 2.14% had dysplasia 1 and 2 while 1.12% had CIN3. Khan et al reported that 3.12% women had dysplastic smear. Ahmed et al noted that 2.47% women had mild dyskaryosis. According to American cancer society guideline for the early detection of cervical neoplasia and cancer, the screening should be started approximately 3 years after the onset of sexual intercourse but not later than age 21 years.

In our study, Ca. in situ was seen in 0.40% women while in a study conducted by Khattak et al Ca. in situ was seen in 0.3% women. In another study by Khan et al., Ca. in situ was seen in 2.02% women.

Pap smear is traditionally obtained using spatula for ecto-cervix and cotton swab for endo-cervix. Sometimes the collection of endo-cervical cells may become inadequate using a spatula using a combination of endo-cervical brush with spatula. In our study, inadequate sampling was present in 2.24% women. Sohail R et al reported that 2% patients in their study had inadequate smear for cytological examination.

It has been concluded in various studies that Pap smear is widely accepted screening technique for detection of abnormalities of cervix.

CONCLUSION

Pap smear examination is an important screening tool to detect precancerous stage of carcinoma of cervix. It should be routinely done in all married and high risk women for timely detection of malignancy.

REFERENCES


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