

Female doctors' awareness towards cervical cancer screening program in Lithuania

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Introduction

Cervical cancer remains a problem in Lithuania where morbidity and mortality rates are one of the highest among all Baltic countries (1). 63% of the target Lithuanian female population participated in the screening program at least once in the 15 years of the program, while 70% is acceptable and >85% desirable for the program to be successful (State Health Insurance Fund Data). Lack of information can be one of the key reasons for insufficient female participation. Due to their field of practice, physicians are therefore considered one of the main sources of information ensuring women's awareness (2).

Aim

The aim of the study was to understand the cervical cancer screening behaviors and knowledge about screening of female physicians of screen age.

Methods

The female physicians were given a survey of 25 questions about cervical cancer screening. The survey was organized online from 2021 January 1st until March 1st. Eligibility for the study was defined as women attribution to screening age (25-60 years). All participants were divided into two groups: child-mother care physicians (CMC) and other medical doctors (OMD).

Results

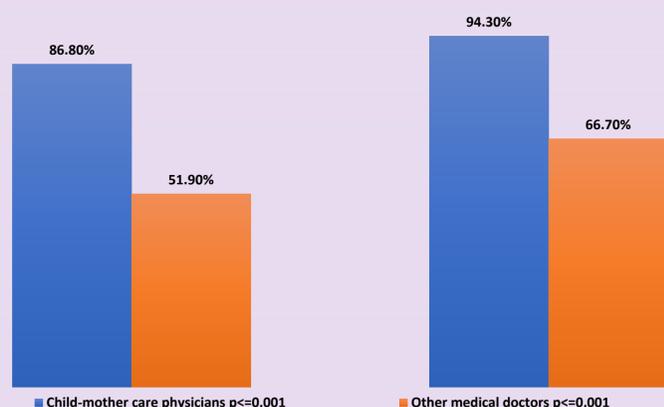
134 respondents filled questionnaire: 39.6% by CMC and 60.4% by OMD. OMD and CMC physicians (97.5% and 100%) were aware that a PAP test is a screening test for pre-cancerous lesions.

A significantly greater proportion of OMD (27.2 % versus 9.4 %) believed that a smear test was part of a full gynecological examination ($p=0.012$).

Both CMC (98.1%) and OMD (97.5%) were aware of the opportunity to have regular and free cervical cancer check-ups in their primary health care clinic.

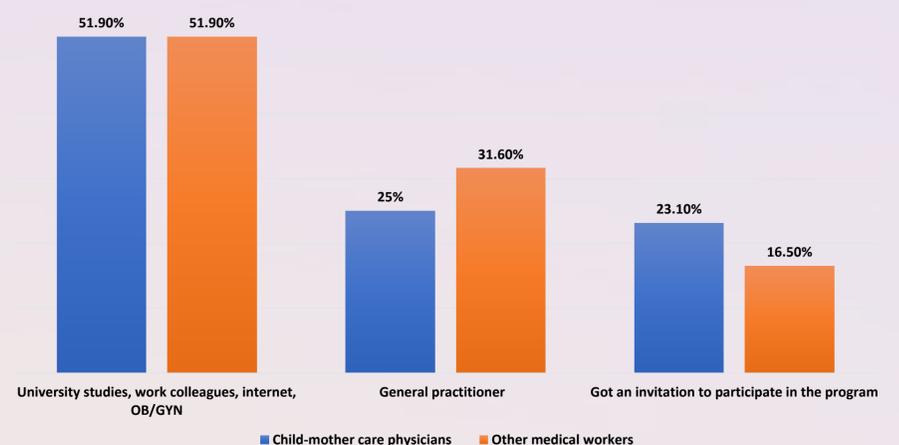
Significantly greater proportion of CMC rather than OMD (86.8% versus 51.9%, $p<0.001$) knew that screening starts at age 25 and screening frequency is 3 years (94.3% versus 66.7%, $p<0.001$).

Knowledge about start age and frequency of the screening program



There was no significant difference between the sources of information (university studies, colleagues, internet, OB/GYN specialists or GP) about cervical cancer screening program in both groups.

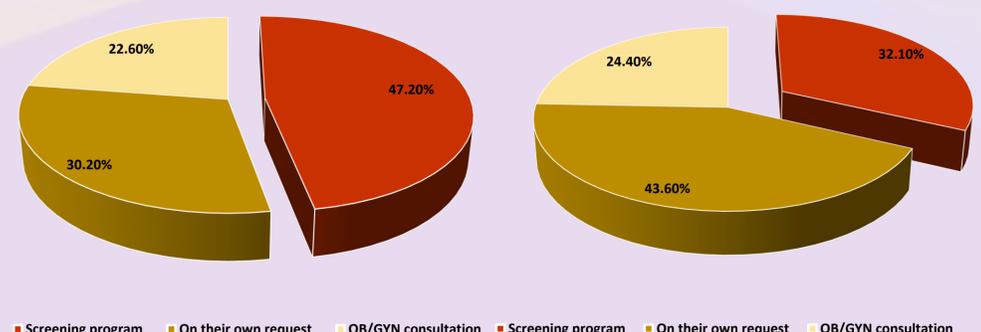
Information source about cervical cancer screening program



While analyzing the circumstances of the last taken test between two groups, both CMC and OMD did a smear test during screening program (47.2% versus 32.1%), did on their own request (30.2% versus 43.6%) and had a smear test done during OB/GYN consultation while applying for complains (22.6% versus 24.4%).

Circumstances of the last taken smear test of Child-mother care physicians

Circumstances of the last taken smear test of other medical doctors



Conclusions

- Both groups are familiar with the screening program but child-mother health care specialists significantly more aware of the participation age and the frequency of testing during the program.
- All the information sources about cervical cancer screening program were equally important in both groups.
- Although both groups were well informed about the possibility to participate in cervical cancer screening program, more than half of respondents had a cervical cancer screening test on their own request or during OB/GYN consultation.

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References:

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- Vaitkienė, Nadišauskienė ir kt. (2016). Public awareness about the importance of the human papilloma virus. Lietuvos akušerija ir ginekologija, 19(1), 10–18.