

Increasing Cervical Screening Uptake during the Covid-19 Pandemic at Lakeside Healthcare, Corby, UK

Authors : Devyani Shete, Sudeep Rai

Abstract : Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has caused one of the highest disruptions to the NHS (National Health Service), especially to the fundamental cervical cancer screening service. To prioritize screening response effectively, it is vital to understand the underlying disease risks amongst groups of women who are less likely to resume their screening/follow up at General Practices. The current government target is to have $\geq 80\%$ of women have an adequate test within the previous 3.5 years (ages 25-49) or 5.5 years (ages 50-64). Aims/Objectives: To increase the number of eligible people aged 25-49 attending cervical screening by 5% at Lakeside Healthcare (a General Practice in Corby). Methods: An online survey was posted on the Lakeside Healthcare website to find out what the barriers towards cervical screening were. It was apparent that patients needed more information catered to their responses. 6 informational videos and a "Cervical Screening Guide" were created for Lakeside patients about cervical screening, which were posted on the Healthcare website. Lakeside also started sending reminder texts to those eligible, with a link to a booking form. Results: On 18th January 2022, 69.7% of patients aged 25-49 years (7207) had an adequate cervical screening test in the last 3.5 years. There were 80 total responders to the online survey. In response to "which of the following are reasons why you have not attended screening", 30% ticked "I kept putting it off/did not get around to it," and 13% ticked "I was worried it would be painful or daunting." In response to "which of the following would make you more likely to book an appointment", 23% ticked "More detailed explanations of what the risks are if I don't have screening," and 20% ticked "I would like more information about the test and what the smear entails." 10% of responders had previous trauma, whilst 28% of responders said the pandemic had impacted them getting a smear. Survey results were used to carry out interventions to increase smear uptake. On 23rd March 2022 (after a 2-month period), 75% of patients aged 25-49 (7119) attended the screening, which was a 5.3% increase from January. Discussion/Conclusion: The survey was vital in carrying out the exact interventions that were required for patients to increase screening uptake, as it is important to know what the populations' needs are in order to create personalized invitations. This helps to optimise response during a pandemic. A HPV self-sample kit at home could be a popular method of dealing with further outbreaks.

Keywords : gynaecology, cervical screening, public health, COVID-19

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