Cervical Cancer in Hispanic/Latino Women

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Cervical cancer is largely preventable if detected early. Minority populations and people of low socioeconomic status are affected disproportionately by cervical cancer. When compared to non-Hispanic white women, Hispanic/Latino women residing in the United States have twice the incidence rate of and 1.4 times the mortality from cervical cancer. Contributing factors include lack of awareness about cancer prevention and available services; lack of access to quality health care; feelings of embarrassment, fear, and fatalism; and limited linguistically and ethnically sensitive information about cervical cancer prevention and detection. Education and screening programs targeted at this population have the potential to decrease the morbidity and mortality associated with cervical cancer, and nurses play an important role in educating Hispanic/Latino women about cervical cancer.

Key Words: cervix neoplasms, Hispanic Americans

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Coronado et al. (2002) reported that Hispanic/Latino women residing in the United States have twice the incidence rate of cervical cancer when compared to non-Hispanic white women. Contributing factors include lack of awareness about cancer prevention and available services; lack of access to quality health care; feelings of embarrassment, fear, and fatalism; and limited linguistically and ethnically sensitive information about cervical cancer prevention and detection.

The exact cause of cervical cancer is unknown, but the following risk factors have been identified (Coronado et al., 2003; Fink & Clark, 2003; Mahon, 1998; Schiffman & Castle, 2003):

- Sexual activity before age 18
- History of more than one sexual partner or a sexual partner with a history of multiple partners
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection
- Smoking
- History of an abnormal Pap result or dysplasia of the cervix
- History of herpes simplex virus type 2 infection
- Low socioeconomic status

Additional risk cofactors have been identified (Castellsague & Munoz, 2003; Epstein, 2003; Hammers & Laitman, 2003; Hatch et al., 2001; Lee, 2000; Moodley, Moodley, Chetty, & Herrington, 2003).

- Oral contraceptive use
- Diethylstilbestrol exposure
- HIV/AIDS- or medication-induced immunosuppression

HPV is sexually transmitted and has been identified in 90%–100% of cervical cancer lesions (McFadden & Schumann, 2001). More than 100 types of HPV have been identified (McFadden & Schumann, 2001).

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