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Important role of papanicolau (Pap) smear in cervical cancer screening in a tertiary care hospital

S. M. Ahalya¹ and R. Shyamala²

¹Department of Pathology, Bhaskar Medical College, Yenkapally Village, Moinabad Mandal, Rangareddy District

²Department of Microbiology, Bhaskar Medical College, Yenkapally Village, Moinabad Mandal, Rangareddy District

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Bhaskar General Hospital where the women attending the Gynaec outpatient are mostly from the lower Socio Economic group. 339 women were examined by Pap smear from January 2011 to December 2012. The Pap smear exam is a very useful test to diagnose neoplastic lesions of the cervix and Cancer cervix is a very common disease in India, especially in the multiparous & in women of low Socio-economic group.

Keywords: Papanicolau smear, Cancer cervix, dysplasia, Squamous cell carcinoma

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, malignant lesions of the cervix represents the most frequent cause of mortality and morbidity and the third most common cause of cancer deaths in females[1]. The Papanicolaou (Pap) test is a screening test performed using cells from the uterine cervix. The Pap test was introduced as a cervical screening test in 1943 by George Papanicolau, after whom it is named. The test is simple, quick and painless. With the woman lying on an examination table, the clinician inserts a speculum in to her vagina to open it and then, using a wooden scraper, takes a sample of cells from in and around the cervix; this is placed on a glass slide and rinsed in liquid fixative and sent to the laboratory for examination[2]. The Papanicolau cervical cytology test is capable of detecting cervical cancer at an early stage and is used widely in developed countries, where it has decreased both the incidence and mortality of cervical cancer. It has been estimated that the use of simple and cost-effective technique has reduced the incidence of cervical cancer by atleast 70%. Even today, many developing countries lack the facility to carry out widespread Pap screening [3, 4, 5].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was done in Bhaskar General Hospital, on 339 women attending the Gynaec Out patient aged from 19-70 years. History and other relevant information were recorded in a specially designed proforma. Written informed consent was obtained from all patients before the smear was taken.

Pregnant women & Hysterectomised women were excluded from this study. Before taking the Pap smear we ensured that the patient was not menstruating. The samples were smeared on two glass slides and were sent for pathological examination. All the smears were classified according to Bethesda system 2001[6].

RESULTS

In this study 339 Pap smears were examined by Pap smear from January 2011 to December 2012. Out of these, 181(53.39%) showed inflammatory changes . 85 (25.07%) had Trichomonas infections, 35 smears (10.32%) showed mild dysplasia.

17 (5.01%) had normal smears

9 smears (2.65%) showed moderate dysplasia.

8 smears (2.35%) showed severe dysplasia.

4 smears (1.17%) showed Squamous cell carcinoma.

None of the patients were smokers. None used oral contraceptive pills. Eight patients gave the history of Intra Uterine Contraceptive Device usage.

DISCUSSION

In our study low income group women were found to be at a high risk of developing cervical pre-malignant and malignant changes, which is because of the higher prevalence of risk factors in this group. Low Socio-Economic Status was seen in 54% patients in our study. This is comparable to the study in California which showed low income women were at high risk of developing Cervical cancer [7, 8]. 53.39% showed inflammatory changes, 25.07% had Trichomonas infections, 10.32% showed mild dysplasia, 5.01% had normal smears, 2.65% showed moderate dysplasia, 2.35% showed severe dysplasia, 1.17% showed Squamous cell carcinoma.

CONCLUSION

The Pap test is an effective screening test to diagnose neoplastic gynaecological disease. This simple test will diagnose the disease early and reduces the morbidity and mortality due to cervical carcinoma. Our Indian Population has got poor awareness regarding the importance of this simple diagnostic test resulting in very poor coverage with the Pap test. The Gynaecologists should strive for disseminating information and increase awareness about the importance of this simple cancer screening test amongst the general population. Pap smear plays an important role in Cervical cancer screening.

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