

## CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

### Is anxiety a reason for non-participation in cervical cancer screening? Questionnaire among patients in integrated care organization in Poland

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**Introduction:** Cervical cancer screening reduces incidence of and mortality from invasive cervical cancer. Despite education programmes, cancer is continuously a source of anxiety due to many stereotypes existing in population.

**Objectives:** We wanted to assess whether anxiety may be a reason for non-participation in cervical cancer prophylactic programme.

**Methods:** Questionnaire (guided interview) with 150 female patients from Domanice region, 25-63 years old (mean 42 y o) and belonging to IC organization - Medical and Diagnostic Centre in Siedlce, Poland. The timeframe was March – June 2016. 10 (6.7%) patients had primary education, 107 (71.3%) had secondary education and 33 (22%) had higher education. 5 (3.3%) patients had previous abnormal result of cervical screening test.

**Results:** Of 150 patients, 52 (34.7%) declared, that they worry that the result of the cervical smear test will be positive for neoplastic cells, 24 (16.0%) did not know if they worry about the result, 74 (49.3%) declared that they rather do not worry that the result of the test will be positive.

117 of 150 (78%) patients believed that early stage cervical cancer is curable, 30 (20.0%) did not know if it is curable and 3 (2.0%) patients believed that early stage cervical cancer is not curable.

Of 150 patients, 44 (29.3) declared that they worry about the test being unpleasant, 2 (1.3%) patient didn't know if they have fear of the test being unpleasant and 104 (69.4%) declared that they do not fear of feelings during the test.

In the whole group, 21 patients (14.0%) declared that they agree with the sentence "you should not look for cancer because you can find it", 42 (28.0%) patients had no attitude to this sentence and 87 (58.0%) did not agree with this sentence.

Koc; Is anxiety a reason for non-participation in cervical cancer screening? Questionnaire among patients in integrated care organization in Poland

20 patients (13.3%) agreed with the sentence "cancer is a conviction". 38 patients (25.3%) had no attitude. 92 patients (61.3%) did not agree with this prejudice.

31 patients (20.7%) declared that they consider tests unnecessary if there are no symptoms of disease, 19 (12.7%) patients had no attitude and 100 (66.7%) patients did not agree with this statement.

Statistical analysis (rho Spearman) revealed that neither attitude to the sentences "you should not look for cancer because you can find it" or "cancer is a conviction" nor considerations about necessity of tests in the absence of symptoms were significantly related to the intention to do the tests every 3 years or more often. However, both worries about unpleasant feelings during the tests and belief that early stage cervical cancer is curable were significantly related ( $p=0.007$  and  $p=0.001$ , respectively) to the declaration of having tests more often than once every 3 years.

**Conclusions:** Prejudice is not a significant factor preventing patients from having cervical screening tests sufficiently often, but fear of unpleasant test and beliefs in possibility of cure of cancer is important.

**Lessons learned:** Education of patients may be beneficial in increasing the number of cervical cancer screening tests. Patient's education may be essential in reducing non-compliance.

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**Keywords:** cervical cancer screening; anxiety; poland

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