

## KNOWLEDGE, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING PAP SMEAR SCREENING TEST AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA EDUCATIONAL ZONE IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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Cervical cancer is a female genital cancer, the fourth most frequent one in women. Primary cause of cervical cancers is recurrent infection with one or more of the oncogenic types of Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Cervical cancer is easily preventable with regular screening tests and follow-up. Even though Pap smear test is freely available, attendance for screening is very less. The objective of the study was to assess knowledge, beliefs and practices regarding Pap smear screening test among school teachers in Sri Jayewardenepura Educational Zone in Western Province, Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted among 300 teachers aged over 30 years from five selected government schools. A validated self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Data analysis was done using SPSS Version 16.0. Total sample comprised of 40% of participants between age 30-39 years, 40% between age 40-49 years and 20% over 50 years of age. Out of 300 participants 96.6% had awareness about cervical cancer and 93.3% had awareness about Pap test. Majority

have known about free availability of the Pap test. Findings reveal that participants possessed good knowledge regarding Pap smear test. Majority (60%) believed that Pap test is a good investment for health. Results showed that 33.3% of participants have undergone a Pap test at least once and majority of 66.7% have never undergone the test. From participants who have undergone Pap test at least once, 90% believed that the procedure is painful and 10% did not believe so. Some participants (39.9%) identified shyness as a reason for low participation of Pap test. The study concluded that even though participants possessed good knowledge regarding Pap smear test, majority have never undergone one. Some beliefs lead to low participation for Pap test such as feelings of shyness and pain, false confidence of never having cervical cancer, fear of tolerability of the results and myth-related concepts of Pap smear as a test for Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Beliefs, Practices, Pap smear test, School Teachers