Awareness of Cervical Cancer and Cervical Cancer Screening Programmes in Ilorin, Nigeria

*Abioye AI'R, Lawal TR, Hamzah TO, Saleeman RO and Adenowuro OE
Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, College of Health Sciences, University of Ilorin, P.M.B.1515, Ilorin. 240003. Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: Abioye AI'R
Email:ewedogbon2003@yahoo.com;abrdabye@unilorin.edu.ng;
+2348037251583; +2348055818413

ABSTRACT
Cervical cancer is a malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri or cervical area. Cervical cancer screening tests are tests carried out to find cervical changes that may lead to cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is the second commonest cancer in women worldwide and is nearly as common as breast cancer. It is one of the commonest cancers of Nigerian women. The prevention of cervical carcinoma relies on population screening for the early detection and appropriate management of its precursor lesions; cervical intraepithelial neoplasia. The objective of this study is to assess the level of awareness of occurrence of cervical cancer and availability of cervical cancer screening facilities in Ilorin, Nigeria. Two hundred (200) respondents were assessed with the use of questionnaires and the areas (Ilorin environs) covered include: Queen Elizabeth Secondary School, Kuntu, Agbo-Oba, Adabata, Okelele, Gaa-Akanbi, Oja-tuntun, Adeta, Saw-mill, Asa-Dam Road, Ibrahim Taiwo Road, Oke-Oyi and Malete. Data analysis was performed using Chi-square test and significance level was set at 5% (p < 0.05). Only 44.5% (89) of the respondents were aware of cervical cancer and 19.5% (39) were aware of cervical cancer screening tests. The awareness of cervical cancer and its screening tests were low in this study and these could be attributed to poor publicity, low level of education and occupation of the respondents. There is a statistical significant relationship between the level of education and occupation with the awareness of both cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening programmes. There is, therefore, the need for concerted efforts by relevant agents in the society to improve the awareness of cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening in Ilorin.

Key words: cervical cancer; cervical cancer screening facilities; level of awareness; Ilorin environs

INTRODUCTION
Malignant diseases are increasingly becoming significant causes of morbidity and mortality in women in developing countries [1]. Cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers of Nigerian women [2]. The prevention of cervical carcinoma relies on population screening for the early detection and appropriate management of its precursor lesions; cervical intraepithelial neoplasia. Papanicolaou and Traut [3] described the Papanicolaou (pap) smear test for cervical screening in 1941. Pap smears effectively reduce the incidence of cervical cancer by 75–90% [4].

The American Cancer Society recommends a Pap smear every year beginning at age 18 years or when sexually active and more frequent screening in high risk populations [4]. Young girls in Nigeria are reportedly highly sexually active [5] and in our environment a high rate of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia in adolescents has been reported [6]. Regular screening of sexually active women would undoubtedly confer an overall public health benefit by reducing morbidity and mortality from this disease and so should be encouraged.

Despite the benefits of cervical cancer screening, many women have never been screened or are not screened at regular intervals. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of awareness of the occurrence of cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening programmes in Ilorin, Nigeria. The findings of this study should inform the design of a targeted cancer screening programme for this important group.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Source of data collection was adopted through the use of questionnaires and a total of 200 respondents were assessed. The questionnaires were essentially administered face-to-face with respondents. The questionnaires were administered to individuals of both sexes, mostly females, single and married. Areas covered include: Kuntu, Agbo-Oba, Okelele, IbrahimTaiwo Road, Gaa-Akanbi, Saw-mill, Oja-tuntun, Adeta, Asa-dam Road, Adabata, Oke-oyi, Malete and Queen Elizabeth Secondary School in Ilorin. Information was collected on socio-demographic characteristics, awareness of cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening programmes. Data analysis was performed using Chi-square test and significance set at the 5% (< 0.05) level.

RESULTS

The age range of respondents was 15 – > 50 years. Most (96.5%) of the respondents were 15–25 years. The number of females (184) outweighed that of males (16) with females being 92% and males 8%. Majority has secondary (32.5%) and tertiary education (49%) with peak percentage in those who have tertiary education and majority of the respondents were students (38.5%). Sources of information on cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening cited by respondents included the media and course of learning.

The result in this study showed that only 44.5% (89) of the respondents were aware of cervical cancer. The awareness in females with respect to the total respondents was 42% and that of males was 2.5%. The awareness in females (94.38%) outweighed those of males (5.62%). Majority of the respondents that were aware fell within the age brackets (15-25) years with the percentage 24% (26) and peak percentage 13.5% (27) within the age bracket (21-25) years. Majority of the respondents that were aware have tertiary education, 70

(35%). With respect to the respondents' occupation, majority of those aware were students, 52 (26%). The means of awareness was either through the media, 52 (26%) or place of studying, 37 (18.5%)

Awareness of cervical cancer screening was only 19.5% in this study. Majority of those who were aware fell within the age range 15-25 years (13%) 26 with peak percentage (7.5%) 15 within the age bracket (21-25) years. The awareness in females with respect to the total respondents was 37 (18.5%) and that of males was 2 (1%), the awareness in females (94.87%) outweighed those of males (5.13%). Majority of the respondents that were aware have tertiary education (15.5%) 31, majority (11%) 22 are students and the means of awareness was either through the media (11%) 22 or in the course of learning (8.5%) 17.

Table 1: The relationship between socio-demographic and other characteristics with awareness of cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening programmes.

Characteristic	Awareness of cervical cancer	Awareness of cervical cancer screening programmes
1. Sex		
Female	84 (42%)	37 (18.5%)
Male	5 (2.5%)	2 (1%)
p value	*p* < 0.0001(S)	*p* < 0.0001(S)
2. Level of education		
None	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Primary	1 (0.5%)	0 (0%)
Secondary	18 (9%)	8 (4%)
Tertiary	70 (35%)	31 (15.5%)
p value	*p* < 0.0001(S)	*p* = 0.0004 (S)
3. Occupation		
Trader	8 (4%)	4 (2%)
Students	52 (26%)	22 (11%)
Others	29 (14.5%)	13 (6.5%)
p value	*p* < 0.0001 (S)	*p* = 0.0020 (S)
4. Means of awareness Media		
School (Course of learning)	52 (26%)	22 (11%)
p value	37 (18.5%)	17 (8.5%)
	p = 0.1378 (NS)	*p* = 0.5218 (NS)

Keys: (S) = Significant; (NS) = Not significant.
From the table above, there is a statistical significant relationship between sex, level of education and occupation with the awareness of both cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening programmes.

DISCUSSION

The level of awareness of cervical cancer in this study was only 44.5%. This is comparable to the 14.5% reported by Aniebue among Nigerian undergraduates in a university at Enugu [7]. It can be said that the level of awareness of cervical cancer is low as compared to 55.5% who claimed not to be aware. This low level of awareness could be attributed to level of education, occupation and publicity. Majority of the respondents

that were aware have tertiary education, 70 (35%). With respect to the respondents' occupation, majority of those aware were students, 52 (26%). The means of awareness was either through the media, 52 (26%) or place of studying, 37 (18.5%).

The level of awareness of cervical cancer screening programmes in this study was 19.5%. This is lower than 90% reported by Hasenyager amongst female

*Abioye AI'R, Lawal TR, Hamzah TO, Saleeman RO and Adenowuro OE

university students in the USA [8]. Udigwe reported an awareness of 87.1% amongst female nurses in Nigeria [4]. In a similar study amongst female undergraduates in Nigeria, Ayinde *et al.* [9] reported an awareness level of 96.0% amongst medical students and 63.7% amongst non-medical students.

It can be said that the awareness of cervical cancer screening programmes is low as compared to 80.5% who claimed not to be aware. This low level of awareness could be attributed to level of education, occupation and publicity. Majority of the respondents that were aware have tertiary education (15.5%) 31, majority (11%) 22 are students and the means of awareness was either through the media (11%) 22 or in the course of learning (8.5%) 17.

CONCLUSION
The level of awareness of cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening is low in Ilorin. The low level of awareness in this study could be attributed to poor publicity and level of education.

RECOMMENDATIONS
There is a critical need for government based cancer education campaign on cervical cancer and the benefits of screening especially amongst the less educated people. The media should also play more active role in the campaign against cervical cancer.

The knowledge of common public health problems should be built into courses undertaken by secondary school students especially those in the senior secondary schools and undergraduates in non-health related fields. Seminars and workshops should also be done regularly for both government and private workers on common health issues especially on cervical cancer and its screening tests.

REFERENCES
1. Mandong B.M. Malignant diseases in Jos, University Teaching Hospital, Nigeria. *Nigerian Medical Practitioner,* (1999), 37: 55 – 58.
2. Aniebue P.N., Onwasigwe C.N., Ndu A.C. Perception, attitude and practice of cancer screening among female doctors and nurses in Enugu., *Journal of College of Medicine*, *UNEC*, (2001) 6: 78 – 80
3. Audu B.M., El-Nafaty A.U., Pindiga H.U. Prevalence of abnormal cervical smears from sporadic screening in a gynaecological clinic. Nigerian Medical Practitioner, (2007) 51: 114 – 118.
4. Udigwe G.O. Knowledge, attitude and practice of cervical cancer screening (Pap smear) among female nurses in Nnewi, South Eastern Nigeria. Nigerian Journal of Clinical Practitioner, (2000). 9: 40 – 43.
5. Ejembi C., Otu A. Sexual behavior, contraceptive practice and reproductive health outcomes among Nigerian University Students, *Journal of Community Medicine and Primary Health Care*, (2004), 16: 8 – 16.
6. Audu B.M., El-Nafaty A.U. and Khalil M. Sexual attitudes and their effects on cervical screening among women in Maiduguri, Nigeria, Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, (1999), 19: 412 – 416.
7. Aniebue P.N. and Aniebue U.U. Awareness and practice of cervical cancer screening among female undergraduate students in a Nigerian University. *Journal of Cancer Education*, Springer, 2010.
8. Hasenyager C. Knowledge of cervical screening among women attending a University health center. *Journal American College of Health,*, (1999), 47: 221 – 224.
9. Ayinde OA, Omigbodun AO. and Ilesanmi A.O. Awareness of cervical cancer, Papanicolaou's smear and it's utilization among female undergraduates in Ibadan. *African Journal Reproductive Health,* (2004), 8: 68 – 80.