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Knowledge, attitude and practice of Pap smear among female nurses in Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital, Sokoto

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Cervical cancer is a health concern among women worldwide, presently is the second-most common cancer type among women in different parts of the world after breast cancer and the commonest cancer in the female genital tract. Industrialized countries have dramatically reduced the incidence of mortality from cervical carcinoma in the last 50 years through aggressive screening programs utilizing pelvic examinations and Papanicolaou (Pap) smear but it still remains a major problem in the developing world. This study was performed to determine the knowledge, attitude and practice of Pap smear as a screening procedure among female nurses in Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital, Sokoto. A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out using 217 questionnaires to screen female nurses out of which 200 were retrieved. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique, structured questionnaires was used in obtaining the data. The findings of the study reveals that 200(100%) of the respondents had heard about Pap smear screening, about 98.3% of nurses were aware of the cervical cancer screening either Pap smear or visual inspection using acetic acid or Lugol's iodine. 85% of the respondents were aware of the major risk factors and symptoms of cancer cervix. 115(57.5%) major source of information was training while in school. 170(85%) believed that cancer of cervix is preventable, detectable and curable if detected early. 86(93%) said that the smear is taken from the cervix. 94 (47%) of the respondents believed that Pap smear is meant for all women of the reproductive age. Most of the respondents 104(52%) said that Pap smear should be done yearly. 132(66%) never advised a client to have a Pap smear. 68(34%) referred asymptomatic female patients for cancer cervix screening. Very few of the respondents 24 (12%) ever had a Pap smear and the common reasons offered for not screened were 62(31%) said they have no symptom of cervical cancer, 60(30%) of the nurses said they are not at risk. 13(54.2%) of the respondents who did the smear did it voluntary, 11(45.8%) had it prescribed by a gynaecologist. 23(11.5%) had lost relations to cancer of the cervix, 182(91%) had knowledge about Human Papilloma Virus vaccine. 195(97.5%) have never been vaccinated against Human Papilloma Virus while only 5(2.5%) received the vaccine and all respondents were willing to do a pap smear and take the vaccine if it is available at affordable prices. Although knowledge of Pap smear as a screening procedure for cervical cancer is high, practice is still low. The findings of this study were compared to other studies within and outside the nation. In spite of having adequate knowledge on cervical cancer, the reasons for the low practice of the cervical cancer screening among Nurses need to be investigated. If nurses can improve the practice of Pap smear screening, they will be able to provide appropriate and accurate information and motivate the general population to join the screening programs. It is recommended that health institutions should periodically organize seminars and training for nurses about cervical cancer so that they can enlighten the community about the need for regular cervical screening