

An Assessment on Knowledge, Attitude, And Practice Towards Cervical Cancer and Its Screening Among Women of Reproductive Age in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State

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ABSTRACT

Background/Introduction: Cervical cancer remains a major cause of morbidity and mortality among women globally and is the fourth most common cancer in women worldwide. In Nigeria, it is the second leading cause of female cancer deaths, largely due to late diagnosis, poor awareness, and low screening coverage. Despite the availability of effective screening methods such as Pap smear, HPV testing, and Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA), uptake remains low. Knowledge gaps, negative attitudes, cultural beliefs, and access barriers contribute significantly to poor preventive practices. This study assessed the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) towards cervical cancer and its screening among women of reproductive age in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 422 women aged 18–49 years residing in Karu LGA. A multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents from four communities (Uke, Masaka, New Karshi, Tudunwada). Data were collected using a semi-structured interviewer-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, and logistic regression were applied to analyze associations between socio-demographic factors and KAP variables at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results and Findings: The study revealed that 63.5% of respondents were aware of cervical cancer, while 42.7% knew about the Pap smear test. Awareness of VIA and HPV DNA testing was very low (1.2% and 0.2%, respectively). Although 80.4% of participants agreed that cervical cancer is a serious disease, only 36.7% had ever been screened. Cost (38.2%) and lack of awareness (25.1%) were major barriers. Most screening took place in hospitals (45.8%). Fear and psychological factors influenced attitudes but did not always translate into preventive action. A majority (81.5%) expressed willingness to undergo future screening if services were accessible and affordable.

Conclusion/Recommendations: Despite moderate awareness and generally positive attitudes, cervical cancer screening uptake remains low among women of reproductive age in Karu LGA. Interventions should prioritize community health education, awareness campaigns, and free or subsidized screening services to improve access and uptake. Strengthening health systems, integrating screening into routine reproductive health services, and addressing cultural and psychological barriers can support the achievement of national and global cervical cancer prevention targets. The study concludes that increasing community-based education, expanding access to free or low-cost screening, and integrating services into routine reproductive health care could significantly improve early detection and reduce cervical cancer burden in Karu LGA. These findings provide a critical evidence base for targeted interventions and policy actions aligned with national and global cervical cancer elimination goals.

Keywords: Cervical cancer, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Screening, HPV, Women of reproductive age, Karu LGA, Nasarawa State

