

Internship report

At

IIHMR University, Jaipur

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Topic: Assessing Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Towards Cervical Cancer and HPV Vaccination Among College Students.

Introduction

Cervical cancer is unique of the limited cancers which is largely avoidable, yet it continues to affect many women around the world. The chief cause of cervical cancer is a continuing infection with definite types of the human papillomavirus (HPV), especially categories 16 and 18. These two types remain linked to nearly 70% of all cervical cancer cases. Even though there are effective screening methods and vaccines to prevent it, cervical cancer still leads to over 342,000 deaths every year globally, making it the fourth most mutual cancer that causes death in women.

India is among the countries most affected by cervical cancer. According to GLOBOCAN 2020, India alone is responsible for nearly 20% of all cervical cancer cases worldwide, with around 123,907 new cases and 77,348 deaths reported every year. This high number is mostly due to low awareness about the disease, poor access to healthcare, and cultural taboos surrounding women's reproductive health.

HPV is single of the most public infections of the reproductive structure and spreads mainly through sexual contact. Whereas many HPV contagions go absent on their own, specific high-risk types can foundation abnormal cell variations in the cervix, which might turn into sarcoma if not treated. Thankfully, there are vaccines available to prevent HPV infection. These vaccines—bivalent, quadrivalent, and nonavalent—have greatly improved the chances of preventing cervical cancer globally.

To tackle this global health issue, the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced a worldwide strategy in 2020 to eradicate cervical cancer. Their goals include immunizing 90% of lassies against HPV by time of life 15, transmission 70% of women by age 35 and again at 45, and confirming 90% of those through abnormal results be given suitable treatment. If these goals are achieved by 2030, it's estimated that more than 62 million deaths could be prevented over the next hundred years.

Methods

The study was conducted at the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), Jaipur, Rajasthan. It was a single-center, cross-sectional, survey-based study involving a total of 119 eligible participants. All participants were fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and were provided with detailed explanations of each aspect before participation. Only individuals aged 20 years and above who voluntarily consented and completed the online survey were included in the study. Out of the 119 participants approached, 78 completed the survey and were considered as responders, while 41 did not respond and were excluded from the final analysis.

The primary objective was to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) regarding cervical cancer prevention through HPV vaccination among science-related postgraduate students. A structured KAP questionnaire was utilized as the study tool to evaluate the participants' awareness, perceptions, and behaviors related to cervical cancer and the HPV vaccine.

Findings

- 1. Knowledge:** The study found that 76.5% of the participants correctly identified the cervix as the organ affected by cervical cancer, and a notable 93.6% were aware that cervical cancer is a common condition among Indian women. Additionally, 82.1% of students knew about the availability of the HPV vaccine, and 71.8% understood that it plays a preventive role in cervical cancer. However, only 38.5% could accurately state the recommended age for HPV vaccination (9–14 years), revealing a significant gap in knowledge related to specific prevention guidelines. Female students and those from medical or paramedical backgrounds demonstrated higher levels of awareness compared to their male and non-medical peers.
- 2. Awareness:** Attitudinal responses showed that 84.2% of participants believed cervical cancer is preventable, reflecting a generally positive outlook toward the disease's manageability. A strong majority (79.3%) agreed that HPV vaccination should be included in routine immunization programs, and 74.6% supported introducing the vaccine in school health initiatives. Despite this favorable attitude, only 41.2% of respondents felt comfortable discussing the HPV vaccine with family or peers,

highlighting ongoing discomfort and stigma associated with reproductive health discussions. Female and medical students expressed more supportive and open attitudes toward vaccination and prevention.

3. **Perception:** In terms of practice, the findings revealed a concerning gap between awareness and action. Only 26.7% of participants reported having received at least one dose of the HPV vaccine, and a mere 19.5% had ever undergone or accompanied someone for cervical cancer screening. Furthermore, only 33.8% had participated in awareness programs related to cervical cancer or HPV. Students from medical disciplines were more likely to engage in preventive practices than their non-medical counterparts. The most commonly cited barriers to vaccination among unvaccinated participants included lack of awareness, parental hesitation, high vaccine cost, and fear of side effects.

Discussion

The present study assessed the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) regarding cervical cancer prevention and HPV vaccination among college students. The findings highlight varying levels of awareness and acceptance, with most respondents showing basic knowledge but gaps in specific areas like vaccine safety, age eligibility, and male vaccination. Understanding these trends is crucial for designing effective health education interventions and improving vaccination uptake among youth. The majority of participants were young adults aged between 23 and 25 years, which is typical for studies conducted among college students or young healthcare professionals. This age group is critical for awareness and intervention strategies related to HPV vaccination and cervical cancer prevention, as they are often the target population for vaccination programs and educational campaigns.

A higher proportion of females participated in the study, reflecting a common trend in health-related research where women tend to be more engaged in topics related to reproductive health. Since cervical cancer directly affects females, it is encouraging that the majority of respondents were women, as this can positively influence awareness and uptake of preventive measures such as screening and vaccination.

Most participants were unmarried, which may impact their perceptions and behaviors regarding sexual health and preventive practices. Unmarried individuals might have different

levels of risk perception and attitudes toward HPV vaccination compared to married individuals, potentially influencing their motivation to seek vaccination and screening.

Most participants correctly identified the cervix as the organ affected in cervical cancer, reflecting a fair level of awareness. However, misconceptions among a significant minority indicate gaps in basic knowledge. Similar findings were reported by Patel et al. [21] and Modi et al. [Modi A et al., 2021], suggesting the need for strengthened educational efforts. Accurate knowledge is essential for promoting HPV vaccination and screening, both of which are crucial for cervical cancer prevention

Recommendation

1. Integrate HPV and Cervical Cancer Education into Academic Curriculum- Educational institutions should incorporate cervical cancer awareness, HPV transmission, and vaccine-related content into health education or life sciences curriculum, particularly targeting both boys and girls from school to college level.
2. Launch Campus-Based Awareness Campaigns- Regular workshops, webinars, and awareness drives should be organized in colleges and universities in collaboration with healthcare professionals to dispel myths, address stigma, and promote open conversations about cervical cancer prevention.
3. Involve Parents, Teachers, and Healthcare Providers- A community-wide approach involving parents, educators, and medical professionals is essential to reinforce vaccine acceptance, clarify doubts, and encourage preventive practices from early adolescence.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that while college students generally possess a foundational understanding of cervical cancer and HPV vaccination, there remain notable gaps in specific areas such as ideal age for vaccination, inclusion of males in vaccination programs, and vaccine safety. Despite a relatively positive attitude towards preventive measures, actual practices—such as undergoing screening or promoting vaccination—remain limited.

The study highlights the importance of targeted health education programs that emphasize not

only the risks associated with HPV infection but also the proven benefits of timely vaccination and regular screening. Affordability and lack of comprehensive knowledge emerged as significant barriers to vaccine uptake, underscoring the need for government-supported vaccination campaigns and awareness drives, especially in educational institutions.

Empowering youth with accurate information and facilitating easy access to preventive services are crucial steps toward reducing the burden of cervical cancer. Strengthening both policy-level interventions and grassroots awareness can ensure a more informed and proactive population capable of embracing HPV vaccination and early screening as essential tools for cervical cancer prevention.

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