A study to identify women at high risk for developing cervical cancer and to evaluate the effectiveness of a structured intervention programme on their knowledge, attitude and practice regarding prevention of cervical cancer in a selected community of Idukki district, Kerala

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ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Cervical cancer is an important public health problem and is the leading cause of death worldwide, especially in developing countries. It is the second most common cancer among women worldwide. More than one fifth of newly diagnosed cervical cancer cases are occurring in India. Despite being a preventable cancer so many deaths are happening because of cervical cancer especially in the developing countries. More than 80% of the global burden of the disease is occurring in developing and underdeveloped countries. This discrepancy is due to lack of effective control measures in these countries. Cervical cancer is a highly curable and treatable cancer as compared with other types of cancer if detected at an early stage. Cervical cancer is highly preventable if awareness level is improved in adolescents and adult women. So it is important to provide appropriate preventive strategies to reduce burden of cervical cancer in developing countries like India.

**Purpose** - To identify the risk status of women for developing cervical cancer and to evaluate whether community based intervention programme improves knowledge, attitude and practice of women regarding prevention of cervical cancer.

**Methodology** – Study was conducted in two phases. Quantitative descriptive design was adopted for the first phase and 430 women residing in selected tribal settlements of Marayoor Panchayath of Idukki district, Kerala was recruited for the study using multistage cluster
sampling. In the first phase risk status of women for developing cervical cancer was assessed through risk assessment questionnaire and they were categorized into low risk, moderate risk and high risk category based on the score obtained. In the second phase experimental randomized controlled trial has been carried out. Community based intervention programme was administered to experimental group. Control group doesn’t received any intervention. Knowledge, attitude and practice regarding prevention of cervical cancer were assessed before and twice after the intervention (1 month & 6 months). Collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 21.

**Results:** With regard to risk status most of the subjects 359 (83.5%) belonged to low risk category, 62(14.4%) to moderate risk category and 9(2.10%) to high risk category. Experimental and control group were homogenous in all baseline sociodemographic variables. Intervention programme was effective in improving knowledge (p< 0.001), attitude (p< 0.001) and practice (p< 0.001) of women regarding prevention of cervical cancer. Significant moderate positive correlation was seen between knowledge and practice (r= 0.408). However there was only significant weak positive correlation found between attitude and practice (r=0.192) and also attitude and knowledge (r=0.282). Significant association was found between knowledge, attitude and practice regarding prevention of cervical cancer with education, age at the time of marriage, number of pregnancies and number of children.

**Conclusion:** Inadequate knowledge, attitude and practice regarding prevention of cervical cancer were reported in the studied population. Intervention programme was effective in improving knowledge, attitude and practice regarding prevention of cervical cancer. Repeated motivation and reinforcement is needed to improve cervical cancer screening behaviour among women. So these programmes are effective in reducing prevalence of cervical cancer and related mortality and morbidity in developing countries like India.
Key words: Cervical cancer; structured intervention programme; risk status; knowledge; attitude; practice.