



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES – DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
OFFICE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH



January is Cervical Health Awareness Month!
Targeting Disparities in Cervical Cancer

Women Dying from a Preventable Disease

Cervical cancer, a preventable disease, is the second-most common cause of cancer worldwide. In the United States, due to the implementation of cervical cancer screening programs, the incidence has fallen by 70% over the last few decades. The American Cancer Society estimates that 12,200 cases of invasive cervical cancer were diagnosed in the United States in 2010, with 4,210 women dying.¹ The mortality and incidence rates for cervical cancer are higher in Los Angeles County compared to the national average, and higher than the Healthy People target goals for 2010.^{2,3}

A Portrait of Disparities

Mortality from cervical cancer is associated with later stage of diagnosis—often stemming from poorer access to preventive services; these include infrequent or no Pap test screening, and/or lack of adherence to follow-up for an abnormal finding. Because minority and low-income women are disproportionately affected by cervical cancer and have worsened mortality rates, the Department of Health and Human Services continues to identify reducing racial and socioeconomic disparities in cervical cancer as a priority area.⁴

Disparities in Los Angeles

Particularly for Latina and low-income women in Los Angeles County, cervical cancer remains a serious health threat. In LA County, the incidence of cervical cancer is as high as 14.3 per 100,000 among Latinas, compared to 9.3 per 100,000 among Asian/Pacific Islander women, 7.6 per 100,000 among black women and 7.5 per 100,000 among white women.³ Women at the lowest socioeconomic status (SES) have the highest age-adjusted rate of cervical cancer at 20 per 100,000 population and women at the highest SES have the lowest age-adjusted rate at 7 per 100,000.³

New Directions, Targeted Efforts – *Cervical Cancer-Free Campaign*

In November 2010, the California Medical Association Foundation launched the California phase of a nationwide *Cervical Cancer-Free* campaign. The Campaign aims to reduce the prevalence of cervical cancer through increased screening and HPV vaccination among vulnerable groups. The first phase of the campaign will focus on Latina women in Los Angeles.

On December 9th, the Foundation launched its efforts in Los Angeles with a roundtable discussion that brought together over 40 key community partners and representatives from Latino ethnic media outlets to discuss the need to promote cervical cancer prevention among Latinas. The group outlined current efforts around cervical cancer prevention in LA County for Latinas, identified programmatic and policy-related gaps, and discussed story ideas that ethnic media would release in January.

As part of the campaign, a comprehensive array of HPV educational resources for healthcare providers and consumers, and multilingual patient education materials have been made available on the project's website, www.thecmafoundation.org/projects/hpv.

Prevention Matters

With the availability of the Pap test and the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, no woman should have to die from cervical cancer. January is National Cervical Health Awareness Month-- an opportunity for providers and community members to raise awareness about this preventable disease, and also remind women to schedule their pap tests and appointments for their children to receive the HPV vaccine series.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, **Office of Women's Health** provides appointments for free or low cost Pap tests to low income uninsured women via our multi-lingual hotline, **1-800-793-8090**. Services are available in seven languages, English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese and Armenian. Referrals for the HPV vaccine are also available.

Prevention Matters!

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Sources

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