

ADHERENCE TO CERVICAL SCREENING TEST BY SERVANTS OF THE FEDERAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION*

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ABSTRACT: The present study aimed to analyze the profile of public servants from four bodies/agencies of the federal public administration, in the city of Curitiba, state of Paraná, and their perceptions of the cervical screening test. Descriptive study conducted in 2014 with 110 servants. The results showed that 38.19% (n=42) were older than 50 years. Regarding the risk factors for cervical cancer, 7.27% (n=08) were smokers; 32.72% (n=36) did not practice physical exercises; 26.36% (n=29) used contraceptives and 6.36% (n=07) did not get the routine cervical screening tests determined by the doctors. Regarding the test, 54.57% (n=60) of the participants said they had no difficulty having cervical screening tests. Regarding the views of the servants on this pathology, 38.19% (n=42) believed it was important to get pap smear test to insure early detection of problems. Therefore, most servants were older than 50, non-smokers, practiced physical exercises, did not take contraceptives and had screening tests annually.

DESCRIPTORS: Cervical malignancies; Pap smear test; Health education.

ADESÃO AO EXAME COLPOCITOPATOLÓGICO POR FUNCIONÁRIAS DO SERVIÇO PÚBLICO FEDERAL

RESUMO: Objetivou-se analisar o perfil de servidoras, em quatro órgãos do serviço público federal na cidade de Curitiba, estado do Paraná e suas percepções quanto à realização do exame colpocitopatológico. Tratou-se de estudo descritivo, no ano de 2014, com 110 servidoras. Os resultados mostraram que 38,19% (n=42) apresentavam idade superior a 50 anos. Entre os fatores de risco para o câncer de colo de útero, 7,27% (n=08) eram fumantes; 32,72% (n=36) não praticavam exercício físico; 26,36% (n=29) faziam uso de contraceptivos e 6,36% (n=07) não realizavam o exame preventivo conforme orientação médica. Sobre o exame 54,57% (n=60) responderam não apresentar nenhuma dificuldade. Relativo à visão das servidoras a respeito da patologia 38,19% (n=42) acreditavam ser importante para o diagnóstico precoce. Portanto, prevaleceram mulheres com idade superior aos 50 anos, não fumantes, praticantes de atividade física, sem uso de contraceptivos e que realizam o exame preventivo anualmente.

DESCRITORES: Neoplasias do colo do útero; Teste de papanicolaou; Educação em saúde.

ADHESIÓN A UNA PRUEBA DE PAPANICOLAOU POR FUNCIONARIAS DEL SERVICIO PÚBLICO FEDERAL

RESUMO: El objetivo del estudio fue analizar el perfil de funcionarias, en cuatro agencias del servicio público federal en la ciudad de Curitiba, estado de Paraná y sus percepciones cuanto a la realización del examen Papanicolaou. Es un estudio descriptivo, hecho en el año de 2014, con 110 funcionarias. Los resultados mostraron que 38,19% (n=42) presentaban edad superior a 50 años. Entre los factores de riesgo para el cáncer de cuello de útero, 7,27% (n=08) eran fumantes; 32,72% (n=36) no practicaban actividad física; 26,36% (n=29) hacían uso de anticonceptivos y 6,36% (n=07) no realizaban el examen de acuerdo a orientación médica. Sobre el examen 54,57% (n=60) contestaron que no presentan ninguna dificultad. Acerca de la visión de las funcionarias sobre la patología 38,19% (n=42) creen ser importante para el diagnóstico precoz. Por lo tanto, prevalecieron mujeres con edad superior a los 50 años, no fumantes, practicantes de actividad física, sin uso de anticonceptivos y que realizan el examen anualmente.

DESCRITORES: Neoplasias del cuello del útero; Prueba de Papanicolaou; Educación en salud.

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INTRODUCTION

The systematic screening of the female population through screening for cervical cancer also called Pap smear test is one of the most effective, safe and cost-effective public strategies for the early detection of this cancer. The word "Papanicolaou" is a reference to the Greek pathologist Georges Papanicolaou, who devised this method in the beginning of the last century. The Pap smear test is currently the main strategy for the early detection of cervical lesions⁽¹⁾.

The Brazilian Ministry of Health recommends that all sexually active women, especially those aged 25-59 years old do regular screening tests. The tests should be done yearly, and after two consecutive negative HPV results, preventive screening can be done every three years⁽¹⁾.

According to data from the *Instituto Nacional de Câncer* – INCA – (Brazilian National Cancer Institute), cervical cancer is the third most common female cancer, ranking after breast and colorectal cancer, and is the fourth most common cause of cancer death of women in Brazil. The INCA estimates that 15,590 new cases of cervical cancer will occur in the 2014/2015 biennium⁽²⁾. The estimated cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates in Brazil showed intermediate values in relation to developing countries, but these rates are high compared to those of developed countries, which have well-structured early detection programs⁽³⁾.

Therefore, Health Promotion, a planned, organized and comprehensive set of healthcare programs and policies, through the expansion of knowledge on the work and health-disease relationship, is crucial. Federal public servants, specifically, benefit from the *Subsistema de Atenção à Saúde do Servidor* – SIASS (Integrated Sub-system Health Assistance to Public Servers), which emphasizes self-care in the events promoted in agencies of the federal public administration that contribute to the protection of health at the individual and collective levels. Thus, the present study aimed to analyze the profile of servants of the federal public administration in the city of Curitiba, state of Paraná, and their perceptions on the cervical screening test.

METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional study with qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The study was conducted at the *Agência da Previdência Social Hauer* - APS

HAUER (Social Security Agency), at the *Instituto Nacional de Seguro Social* – INSS (National Social Security Institute), at *Policia Rodoviária Federal*, 7^a *Superintendência* (Federal Highway Police Department – 7th Superintendency) and in the *Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento* – MAPA (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply), located in the city of Curitiba, Paraná, in 2014. A random sample composed of 110 servants of the federal public administration was used.

The instrument used in data collection was a questionnaire with nine closed questions and four open questions that sought to identify socio-demographic aspects and the opinions of the participants on cervical cancer and the benefits of the actions promoted under the Integrated Sub-system Health Assistance to Public Servers – SIASS.

The following inclusion criteria were pre-established: be a federal public servant, be aged over 20 years of age and participate in the events promoted by the SIASS. Exclusion criteria: servants that performed outsourced services in federal agencies.

The questionnaire was applied during the events promoted by the SIASS in the morning and afternoon periods during the year of 2014. After completing the questionnaires, the women received leaflets with information on the importance of the cervical screening test and the high survival rates of cervical cancer when it is early detected. Quantitative analysis was done using frequency distribution and qualitative analysis was made using the content analysis methodology, in which researchers interpret and identify the categories of analysis that arise from the responses of participants, to understand the phenomenon studied⁽⁴⁾.

The study was authorized by the legal representative of the SIASS. Confidentiality was ensured to the participants according to resolution 466/2012 of the Brazilian National Health Council⁽⁵⁾. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Centro Universitário Campos de Andrade, under 000581/2014.

RESULTS

Data were categorized into: Characterization of the women; Risk factors for the development of cervical cancer; The attitude of federal public servants towards having preventive screening; The issues involved in getting cervical screening tests; The knowledge of federal public servants

about cervical cancer; and Events carried out by the SIASS aimed to promoting the health of federal public servants.

Characterization of the women

The questionnaire was completed by 110 women. Of these, most were aged above 50 years (n= 42; 38.19%). Table 1 shows the other variables.

Risk factors for the development of cervical cancer

Concerning smoking, one of the risk factors addressed in the study, most respondents were non-smokers (n= 102; 92.73%). Regarding routine screening (Pap smear testing) (n= 103; 93.64%) have Pap smear tests annually or as determined by the doctor. The other variables are shown in Table 2.

The attitude of federal public servants towards having preventive screening (Pap smear tests)

Regarding having Pap smear testing and its importance for the prevention of cervical cancer, 38.19% (n= 42) recognized the importance of having routine screening for women. The other responses are shown in Table 3.

The testimonies below describe the importance attached by 38.19% of the respondents to cervical screening tests:

Screening tests are especially important for women. (M31)

Extremely important because effective control depends on early detection. (M14)

Of utmost importance in preventing this disease. (M36)

Taking these tests is very important for women's health (M59)

Of utmost importance in preventing the disease. (M74)

Of utmost importance. (M90)

Very important. I get regular screening tests. (M86)

It is very important to get screening tests to prevent future problems. (M66)

The issues involved in having cervical screening tests

Regarding possible difficulties having cervical screening tests, 54.57% (n= 60) of the respondents reported not having any difficulty taking cervical screening tests. The other variables are shown in Table 4.

Table 1 – Characterization of federal public servants. Curitiba, PR, Brazil, 2014

Variables	n	%
Age range		
20 to 30 years	11	10
30 and 40 years	34	30.91
40 and 50 years	23	20.90
> 50 years	42	38.19
Length of time working in the federal public administration		
< 5 years	28	25.45
05 to 10 years	17	15.45
10 to 20 years	25	22.72
> 20 years	40	36.38
Marital status		
Single	25	22.72
Married	56	50.93
Divorced	28	25.45
Widow	1	0.90
Number of children		
None	35	31.83
One child	27	24.54
Two children	32	29.09
> 03 children	16	14.54

Table 2 – Risk factors related to cervical cancer. Curitiba, PR, Brazil, 2014

Variables	n	%
Smoker		
Yes	8	7.27
No	102	92.73
Drinks alcohol		
Socially	80	72.74
Daily	0	0
More than twice a week	1	0.90
Does not drink alcohol	29	26.36
Practices physical exercises		
Daily	16	14.54
Twice to three times a week	44	40.02
More than four times a week	14	12.72
Does not practice physical exercises	36	32.72
Takes birth control pills		
Yes	29	26.36
No	81	73.64
Has preventive screening tests		
Yes	103	93.64
No	7	6.36

Table 3 – The views of federal public servants on having preventive screening (Pap smear test). Curitiba, PR, Brazil, 2014

Variables	n	%
Necessary	29	26.36
Important	42	38.19
Type of prevention	32	29.09
Did not answer the question	7	6.36

Table 4 – Difficulty having cervical screening tests. Curitiba, PR, Brazil, 2014

Variables	n	%
Discomfort/shame	9	8.18
Forgets to have cervical screening tests	3	2.72
Lack of time	24	21.81
No difficulty	60	54.57
Did not answer the question	14	12.72

The following reports indicate that 54.57% of the respondents had no difficulty taking routine cervical screening tests:

I have no difficulty taking a cervical screening test; I use my health insurance plan. (M33)

I have no difficulty. (M45)

No difficulty. (M106)

I have no difficulty taking a cervical screening test (M108)

The knowledge of federal public servants about cervical cancer

According to 36.38% (n= 40) of the respondents survival rates increase significantly with early detection. The other answers are represented in Table 5.

Most respondents believe that early diagnosis is important, as follows:

I don't know the details. I just know that cervical cancer can be detected by the test. (M48)

I just know that the cervical screening test is of key importance in ensuring early detection and good prognosis.(M93)

Preventive screening is necessary; cervical screening tests should be taken annually to increase survival rates (M05)

It is a very aggressive disease, which may lead to death if it is not treated on a timely basis (M88).

Table 5 – The views of federal public servants about cervical cancer. Curitiba, PR, Brazil, 2014

Variables	n	%
Early diagnosis and survival rate	40	36.38
HPV (Human papilloma virus) and cancer	7	6.36
Serious illness	8	7.27
Little knowledge about cervical cancer	22	20
A major cause of death of women	9	8.18
Did not answer the question	24	21.81

Prevention is the best thing to do... taking care of yourself (M54)

This disease can be prevented with the cervical screening test (M61)

Cervical screening tests may prevent or even provide early detection of cervical cancer. There are also some types of cancer that can be prevented by vaccination (M100)

The internet makes it easier to obtain information on the disease. Prevention is the best way to avoid this cancer (M106).

Events carried out by the SIASS aimed to promoting the health of federal public servants

The health events promoted by the SIASS in the federal public administration aim to raise the awareness of health issues among public servants. Several teams are involved in this process: nursing, nutrition, massage therapists, among others, who conduct educational activities.

According to our findings, 40.93% of the servants (n=45) reported that these events are important to raise awareness of healthy habits. Others (n=25; 22.72%) emphasized the quality of life, while 22 (20%) reported that these events were excellent for occupational health and (n=05; 4.54%) said that the guidance provided by the teams involved in these events helped preventing several diseases. Only 11.81% (n=13) of the women did not answer the question because they were participating in the event for the first time.

Most respondents reported that the events conducted in federal agencies, through the SIASS, raise awareness of healthy habits, as follows:

These events are very important because I believe prevention is always the best thing to do. (M22)

Important to raise awareness of preventive care that we all need (M48)

Very important. These events should be more frequent. (M31)

Important. These events should be held every year (M102)

Everybody can benefit from them (M88)

Important, as we usually don't have much time to care for our health. (M75)

These events are important because we tend to neglect our health (M50)

Very important for us, because we don't pay much attention to our health when we are performing our work activities. It is an opportunity to improve our quality of life.(M110)

DISCUSSION

Most women were over 50 years of age. Data similar to those from a study conducted in the city of Uberaba, state of Minas Gerais, with 335 women, whose ages ranged from 54 to 90 years, and 91.6% of them were fully aware of the importance of taking regular cervical screening tests and its benefits⁽⁶⁾.

Since the activities involved federal public servants, the educational level may have contributed to the greater adherence to preventive screening. Thus, years of schooling is a strong indicator of the risk for the development of diseases⁽⁷⁾.

This was observed in a study conducted in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, with 1,214 women, and 76.43% had regular screening tests. According to these findings, a low educational level was associated with poor adherence to the cervical screening test⁽⁸⁾. In another study carried out in the state of Bahia with 230 women, non-adherence to the cervical screening test was significantly higher among those respondents who have never attended school⁽⁹⁾.

Regarding the length of time working in the federal bodies, most servants have been working in the federal administration for more than 20 years. The presence of women in the labor market in Brazil involved significant changes in their roles, lifestyles and standards of health care⁽¹⁰⁾.

Most respondents were married and had one to three children. This can be considered a risk factor associated to cervical cancer. However, childless

women may be less likely to get screening tests⁽⁷⁾. Another study emphasized that adherence to screening tests was higher among women with four or more children or with a history of four or more deliveries⁽⁹⁾.

Marital status is also associated with better health of people and populations, in general, as it provides some protection and security to the women, reflecting directly in their health status. Marriage appears to bring positive changes in the sexual and health behaviors of the individuals. In general, risks for sexually transmitted diseases are reduced and pregnancy can be planned, conferring stability, quality of life and greater ability to deal with the issues of modern life⁽¹⁰⁾.

In a study with 51 women in the state of Piauí, 66,7% of them were married and 55% sought healthcare services in order to take pap smear tests⁽¹¹⁾. This finding differs from those of another study, in which the respondents, when asked about the importance of cervical screening tests, focused rather on curative aspects than on preventive aspects of the test⁽¹²⁾.

In the present study, most participants were non-smokers, drank socially, practiced physical exercises twice to three times a week and did not take birth pills. So, the study sample had lifestyle habits that are effective in reducing the probability of cervical cancer, since women who drink alcohol more than twice a day and smoke 11 to 30 cigarettes per day have high rates of cervical change. Also, long-term use of contraceptives (5 to 9 years) is associated with an increased risk of cervical cancer⁽¹³⁾.

On the other hand, physical activity is associated with cancer prevention, as it activates biological mechanisms of the immune system that act on oxygen free radicals, inhibiting tumor formation⁽¹⁴⁾. Contrasting with our findings, another study with 51 women obtained the following results: 41.2% were overweight and 19.6% were obese. Of these, 72.5% were sedentary⁽¹¹⁾. In the present study, the participants reported taking important measures to prevent cervical cancer.

The present study showed that most federal public servants approved of preventive screening and took regular cervical screening tests. This finding differs from the results of other studies with 200 women in the state of Minas Gerais, in which most respondents had little knowledge of the purpose of the test⁽¹⁵⁾. Regular cervical screening tests are essential, because with early diagnosis and proper treatment the cure rate of

the disease is 100%⁽⁷⁾.

Besides, anxiety over the result of the test and embarrassment are the main factors that influence the decision of many women to adhere to cervical screening tests. In a study conducted in the state of Paraná, with 81 women, 65.61% of them did not take cervical screening tests because of embarrassment or fear of the result⁽⁷⁾.

A study with 35 federal public servants of the state of Ceará reported situations of anxiety and embarrassment related to taking the test⁽¹⁶⁾. However, in the present study most women did not have any difficulty in taking the test, which is positive and suggests appropriate understanding of the importance of preventive screening.

Finally, many women participated in events under the SIASS aimed to standardize health care practices by raising the awareness of health issues (preventive screening, monitoring) among federal public servants⁽¹⁷⁾. The actions taken emphasize the importance of preventing health hazards, particularly those related to women's health.

CONCLUSION

Most women that participated in the study were over 50 years, non-smokers, practiced regular physical activity, did not take contraceptives and had screening tests annually.

Also, these women perceived the test to be important in reducing the risks of cervical cancer. It should be stressed that they had appropriate knowledge of the preventive actions carried out by the SIASS and had no difficulty taking cervical screening tests.

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