



The recommendations of complex changes in the area of prophylaxis of cervical cancer in Poland

Programme objectives

Over three thousand women in Poland fall ill with the cervical cancer every year. Nearly 1800 of them die.

The Coalition Against The Cervical Cancer (RSM Coalition) aims at decreasing the number of deaths up to the half and reducing the sick rate.

RSM Coalition consists of 60 social partners: non-governmental organizations, public institutions, local governments and companies.

The proposals of recommendations have been created for 6 months in five experts groups supervised by the Curriculum Committee.

Recommendations

Cervical cancer is one of the most common malignant cancers affecting women. But nowadays it is also the only tumor where mortality could be entirely eliminated, provided that proper education as well as primary and secondary prevention measures are implemented.

An effective system for cervical cancer prevention should be based on three pillars: education, cytology and vaccinations. It should also include a wider age group of women than ever before. The present system of cervical cancer prevention in Poland is so far based only on two pillars: education and cytology. Both are aimed at women aged 25-59.

Preventive actions should be launched now among teenage girls in order to develop a habit of disease prevention. Considering the fact that cervical cancer cases are also reported among 15-24 year-old women, it is important to promote education and prevention amongst younger female population as well.

RSM Coalition emphasizes that action against cervical cancer will be successful only if complex solutions are implemented, which means covering the entire population of girls and women starting from the age of 12. For particular groups the following activities should be directed:

- I. Women aged 25-59 - optimization of the Population Based Programme for Early Detection of Cervical Cancer
- II. Girls aged 12 - the implementation of the Population Based HPV Vaccination Programme
- III. Girls and women aged 13-24 - creating the awareness of the need for prevention of RSM

The organizing of modern prevention in Poland is not possible without the expansion and increasing of the range of the IT Monitoring System for Prevention (SIMP) and changes in the state funding of prevention of cervical cancer. "Recommendations of complex changes in the area of prophylaxis of cervical cancer in Poland" – point out the solutions for each of areas mentioned above.

Education

The authors of the recommendations emphasize the need for changes in the promotion of prevention initiatives.

Firstly: encouraging women to take tests in fear of contracting the disease is ineffective.

Secondly: the information on the disease should be tailored to its recipients; education initiatives should cover female teenagers. Girls and their parents need to have knowledge of the availability of HPV vaccinations. Young women need to be aware of the necessity to have cytology tests made. Women aged 25-59 have to know that they can undergo free cytology.

Thirdly: there is a need for bigger number of doctors to be involved.

Till now, cervical cancer has been dealt with mostly by oncologists and gynecologist. But as it turned out, it is the primary care physicians and pediatricians who can play a key role in the disease prevention.

The Polish Coalition Against Cervical Cancer recommends developing of The Cervical Cancer Prevention Code and putting it into practice. The Code which is meant for primary care physicians, gynecologists and pediatricians, clearly defines the role of physicians of particular specializations and strengthens the partnership between subjects already engaged in educational institutions.

Cytology

Despite individual invitation letters sent out, only 27% of Polish women take part in free cytology tests.

Increased education efforts aimed at physicians of various specializations, nurses and midwives should encourage medical community to participate actively in talking women into attending regular screening tests. There should be also more clinics and consulting rooms offering free cytology because in many





No Polish woman has to die because of cervical cancer

regions of Poland women claim to have them too far from their homes. The last point is to increase the quality of cytological screening which basically means improving the accuracy of cytology.

The Polish Coalition Against Cervical Cancer states that midwives should play greater role in conducting cytological screening which should be contracted by the National Health Fund. It also suggests picking up smears in mobile points (such as cytobuses) and introducing common standards for taking and evaluating cytological smears.

Vaccination

The knowledge of the HPV (human papilloma virus) as a risk factor for cervical cancer has led to the real breakthrough in medicine - to the development of the vaccine. Following recommendations of the World Health Organization and medical associations, many countries have launched population programmes for HPV vaccination that cover selective target groups. Conducting such programme among Polish teenagers would be an excellent complementation of education initiatives and would increase attendance rates in similar future projects.

At present, HPV vaccinations, though included in the Calendar of Protective Vaccinations, are just recommended and not financed by the Ministry of Health. The Polish Coalition Against Cervical Cancer recommends covering 12 year-old girls by the population programme for HPV vaccination.

Registers

Cytologies carried not included in the Population Programme for Prevention and Early Cervical Cancer Detection are not registered, therefore there is no history of reports of the girls vaccinated against HPV. Meanwhile, a modern register, which provides for the latest European guidelines, would facilitate a reliable assessment of health effects of current and future activities.

The Polish Coalition Against Cervical Cancer recommends that all cytologies be registered and included in the Informatics Prevention Tracking System, financed from public funds. Monitoring further diagnostics and treatment of women with abnormal histopathological results would be the next step.

Finances and Organization

It is important to integrate all initiatives against cervical cancer as cervix cancer prevention is currently

carried out by numerous organizations and institutions. The Ministry of Health and the National Health Fund are responsible for cytological programme. While not many local governments organize HPV vaccinations, non-governmental organizations, along with healthcare-oriented institutions, deal with education concerning cervical cancer. Proper coordination of the whole range of these initiatives will result in better management of funds assigned for prevention. The Polish Coalition Against Cervical Cancer suggests introducing uniform standards for medical professionals and institutions dealing with education and vaccination programmes in order to enhance effectiveness of the whole cervix cancer prevention programme.

Carrying out the Recommendations

The proposed changes do not refer to structural modification of the Population Programme for Prevention and Early Cervical Cancer Detection. They only indicate how to make use of it more effectively. Taking into account complexity of the project as well as participation of numerous subjects currently engaged in prevention initiatives, the Polish Coalition Against Cervical Cancer advises establishing the Expert Committee at the Ministry of Health which would be responsible for preparing detailed instructions on the basis of the idea already presented.

The Population Programme costs the state budget 51.8 million PLN. Every year additional 42.5 million PLN are spent on the women who were diagnosed with cervix cancer. This gives the total amount of nearly 95 million considering the cytological screening attendance rate of 27%.

If the rate reached 100%, the amount of funds from the National Health Fund covering only services within the Population Programme would exceed 155 million PLN and the total cost would reach the level of 200 million PLN.

With the assumed vaccinations coverage between 70 and 90% of the population, the combined costs of vaccination and educational activities will be around 60 million PLN. The cost of vaccines and vaccination procedures alone will contribute to the rise in costs. On the other hand, there will be a gradual fall in the morbidity of cervix cancer among the vaccinated population which will subsequently diminish the costs of treatment.

Adjustment of the current programme as well as extending of prevention initiatives over two new women groups (aged 12 and between 13 and 24) will have led to a decrease in the incidence and mortality rates from cervix cancer by 2020.

