

10th Euro Global Summit and Expo on

Vaccines & Vaccination

June 16-18, 2016 Rome, Italy

What do Lebanese women know about cervical cancer and human papillomavirus prevention? A report on awareness levels in urban communities

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Objectives: To evaluate the knowledge of Lebanese women about cervical cancer's symptoms and risk factors and human papillomavirus (HPV) infection and to measure the uptake of the cervical cancer screening test (Pap smear) and that of HPV vaccination.

Methods: 444 women residing in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, with no medical background, filled out a 32 item questionnaire about cervical cancer and HPV. Collected data was exported to and analyzed in SPSS® v. 21.0.

Results: Most participants were young (45.7% aged 18 to 25), residing in Mount Lebanon (51.8%), Christian (50.7%), single (49.3%), with high education qualifications (73.9%) and currently employed (49.1%) in a field not related to health (84.9%). 64.6% did not visit a general physician nor a gynecologist regularly. 85.6% were aware of cervical cancer. 53.9% correctly identified HPV infection involvement in the pathogenesis of cervical cancer. 35.6% were aware of HPV infection but 80.4% believed their information was lacking. 37.6% of participants had been screened by Pap smear for cervical cancer at least once in their lives whereas 9% did not know what a Pap smear was. Screening was significantly associated with cervical cancer awareness and regular visits to general health physicians and gynecologists. 11.7% of participants aged 18 to 35 were vaccinated against HPV. Vaccination uptake was significantly associated with cervical cancer awareness, religion, field of work and studies and regular visits to gynecologists.

Conclusion: Urban Lebanese women are not well informed about cervical cancer and HPV. Screening by Pap smear and HPV vaccination uptakes are non-satisfactory.

Biography

Jacques Choucair is an Infectious Diseases Specialist in Hotel Dieu de France teaching hospital in Beyrouth. He has obtained his MD degree in 1994 from the Saint-Joseph University, Faculty of Medicine in Beyrouth. He has completed a 2 years Fellowship from 1998-2000 at Bichat Claude Bernard Hospital and Bacteriology at Broussais Hospital affiliated to University of Paris V. He has received his Diploma in Infectious Diseases (1999), Saint-Joseph University, Beyrouth. Since 2001, he is a Practitioner and ID Consultant in the Infectious Diseases Department at Hotel Dieu de France de Beyrouth Teaching Hospital. He also has completed Medical Teaching Diploma from the University of Montreal in Canada in 2003. He has published more than 30 articles and is a Reviewer in national and international journals. His main topics of interest are bacterial resistance and the proper use of antibiotics. He is a Former Member of the scientific committee of the Lebanese Society of Infectious Diseases, Member in the Arab association for the proper use of antibiotics, Member of the infection control committee at the Hotel Dieu de France Teaching Hospital, Member of ECMID and Member of the Evaluation and Docimology Committee and In Charge of the OSCE exam at the Saint Joseph University, School of Medicine.

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