

Joint Event on

3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on  
**MEDICAL SCIENCES, HYPERTENSION AND HEALTHCARE**  
and  
World Congress on  
**ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION AND ARTIFICIAL ORGANS**  
August 24-25, 2018 Tokyo, Japan

## Limited understanding of Pap smear test among women: A barrier to the cervical cancer screening program in the United Arab Emirates

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Global data indicates that cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide. Important factors that affect applications for early diagnosis of cervical cancer are shown to be social beliefs and values and poor knowledge that contribute to women's level of participation in screening for cervical cancer and have a significant impact on the women's decision to take preventive action against cancer of the cervix. The study was conducted among 599 women during September 2016 to March 2017. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to determine women's knowledge about cervical cancer and screening, demographic characteristics and the barriers to screening. The women in the UAE were limited ( $66.3 \pm 22.2$ ) in their knowledge about the Pap smear test. Their understanding to undergo the Pap smear test every three years provided they obtained an initial negative/normal Pap smear result was abysmal. In spite of the positive attitude of the women towards the Pap smear test, almost 80% of the women surveyed were unaware of precancerous lesions. Furthermore, having higher income (21/29, 72%,  $p=0.027$ ) and more miscarriages were associated with better practice of Pap smear (19/26, 73%,  $p=0.010$ ). The knowledge levels of the women in the UAE were significantly higher ( $66.3 \pm 22.2$ ), when compared to their attitude ( $60.5 \pm 20.9$ ,  $p=0.03$ , 95% CI (0.22-11.3), Chi-square 4.38) and practice ( $53.7 \pm 24.1$ ,  $p=0.001$ , 95% CI (6.9-18.1), Chi-square 19.7). A well-designed health education program on cervical cancer and benefits of screening would increase the awareness among women in UAE. One more important point is the fact that better communication with health professionals and improvement of access to health care services should increase the rate of cervical cancer screening.

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