

SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

New Hope in the Global Fight Against Cervical Cancer **[Word Count: 768]**

For the first time in history, we have an opportunity to eradicate cervical cancer – one of the leading cancer killers of women worldwide. New approaches to prevention that include both vaccination and testing for HPV – the primary cause of cervical cancer -- promise to end both suffering and deaths from this disease. No other cancer has such a clearly understood cause, as well as available technologies to help prevent it.

Cervical cancer is the second-most-common cancer affecting women worldwide. Each year, approximately 500,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and an estimated 250,000 die of the disease, according to the World Health Organization. This disease is especially devastating because it typically strikes women while they are relatively young.

Medical experts now agree that almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by a virus – the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is extremely common; most sexually active people will be infected with it at some point in their lives. It can remain dormant for months or even years, but in most cases, HPV causes no harm or noticeable symptoms. Only when HPV infection is persistent, lasting for several years or more, can it potentially lead to cervical disease or cancer. Cervical cancer usually develops very slowly and is highly preventable if pre-cancerous cells are caught and treated early.

Traditionally, cervical cancer screening has been done with a Pap smear, a procedure in which cervical cells are viewed under a microscope, looking for abnormalities caused by HPV. The Pap has helped significantly reduce cervical cancer rates in countries with well-established screening programs, but it is not perfect. The Pap is subjective and can miss abnormal cells until invasive cancer has developed – a particular concern in regions where women may only be screened once or twice in their lives. Pap testing also requires highly trained technologists, which is not feasible in low-resource areas. In these countries, most cases of cervical cancer go undetected, causing tens of thousands of deaths every year.

Cervical cancer is unique among all major cancers in that, with advanced medical technologies, it is preventable. A test for HPV, the cause of cervical cancer, dramatically improves the ability to identify women at risk of developing this deadly disease. Studies have shown that the HPV test is 86 percent to 97 percent accurate when used alone to identify women with pre-cancerous cells or cancer and virtually 100 percent effective when used in combination with a Pap. Numerous studies have also concluded that HPV testing alone could help find more cases of cervical cancer, save more lives and better target healthcare resources in developing economies, versus prevention programs that use other methods.

In addition to screening techniques, HPV vaccines are now available and have been shown to be 100 percent effective at preventing infection from the two types of HPV that cause 70 percent of all cervical cancers. The vaccines are most effective for girls and young women who have not yet been exposed to the targeted types of HPV. HPV vaccination has significant potential for helping to reduce cervical cancer rates for future generations of women. It is important to note, though, that screening is still necessary for vaccinated girls and women, since the HPV vaccine does not

protect women who have already been infected with HPV. Likewise, it is unlikely to provide adequate protection from cervical cancer caused by HPV types not included in the vaccine.

Medical advances, however, are only the first step in the quest to end cervical cancer. Every age-appropriate woman and girl must be informed about the need for screening and vaccination, and be given access to the most current prevention strategies. Governments must take the lead in this effort.

Now, women leaders around the world are also playing a key role. The Global Consortium of Women to End Cervical Cancer is uniting business, professional and governmental leaders in an effort to educate other women about cervical cancer prevention. At the same time, these women leaders will lobby their governments to make HPV-based prevention programs available and accessible for all age-appropriate women and girls.

The Global Consortium is a project of the Global Summit of Women, which brings together a wide range of leaders at an annual information-and-idea exchange designed to advance the role of women in the global marketplace. The rationale for the Global Consortium of Women to End Cervical Cancer is that a woman's health is fundamental to her ability to participate in society at all levels. And what better legacy to leave to our daughters than a victory for women in the global war on cancer.

For more information, please visit www.globewomen.org.