

# Global launch of Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy by WHO



November 17, 2020

The WHO will launch the Global strategy for Cervical Cancer elimination on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020. On this historic day around 194 countries all over the world will officially join together in their journey to achieve the goal of Cervical Cancer elimination by 2030,

As per the GLOBOCON 2018 data, Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women worldwide, contributing to an estimated 570,000 cases and about 311,000 deaths from the disease. In India we have the highest burden of cervical cancer in the world, with an estimated 96,000 new cases and 60,000 deaths every year.

WHO has set the target to maintain the incident rate of cervical cancer to four per 100,000 women by 2030, it must be mentioned that currently in our state we have an incident rate of 14.2 per 100,000 of population as per the population based cancer registry of Kamrup Urban District. It may be mentioned that among all the female patients attending Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute, cervical cancer is one of the top 10 leading sites as per the HBCR (NCRP-ICMR) data. We at Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute saw 560 patients of cervical cancer in 2017, 557 in 2018 and 498 patients in 2019. Almost 70-80 percent of these patients comes in advanced stage of the disease. So it is high time that all of us join hands to fight this disease and help the Global vision of cervical cancer elimination. To achieve this goal WHO's strategy will rest on three main pillars:

- prevention through vaccination
- screening and treatment of precancerous lesions
- treatment and palliative care for invasive cervical cancer

WHO recommends a set of targets or milestones that each country should meet by 2030 to get on the path to eliminate cervical cancer within the century:

90%

of girls fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by the age of 15

70%

of women screened using a high-performance test by the age of 35, and again by the age of 45

90%

of women identified with cervical disease receive treatment (90% of women with pre-cancer treated and 90% of women with invasive cancer managed).

On the occasion of the Global launch of Cervical Cancer elimination strategy, the moment has arrived to act on the call of WHO for all the policy makers, healthcare providers, civil society, research community and private sectors to collectively work together towards this ambitious strategy to eliminate cervical cancer from this world by 2030.

## Cervical Cancer: Symptoms and Signs

In the early stage it may be totally asymptomatic, but when the symptom appears, women generally complain of:

- Blood spots or light bleeding between or following periods.
- Menstrual bleeding that is longer and heavier than usual.
- Bleeding after intercourse, douching, or a pelvic examination.
- Increased vaginal discharge.
- Pain during sexual intercourse.
- Bleeding after menopause.
- Unexplained, persistent pelvic and/or back pain

## Risk Factors

Risk factors for cervical cancer include:

- Early marriage before 18 years of age or initiation of sexual activity before the age of 18 years.
- Early age at first pregnancy before the age of 20 years.
- Multiple pregnancies with short intervals between pregnancies.
- Multiple sexual partners.
- Women suffering from sexually transmitted disease.
- Women with weak immune system.
- Women who smokes.
- Along with all these risk factors the presence of HPV infection is said to be the universal associative risk factor for cervical cancer.
- Avoiding the above risk factors helps in prevention of cervical cancer.

## Prevention

- Pap Rest
- HPV DNA Test.

PAP test should be started from 21 years or 3 years post marriage and repeated every 3 years till the age of 65 years and when both PAP and HPV tests are done together, it has to be repeated every 5 years till 65 years. It is estimated that atleast one PAP test done in and around 40 years of age during the life of every woman can reduce the burden of cervical cancer by almost 50%.

### ▪ HPV Vaccination

In the year 2006 US FDA approved the HPV vaccines for the prevention of cervical cancer and since then it is being used all over the world with millions of doses being administered. Three variants of the vaccines are available in the market out of which two of them are currently available in India. Vaccination is advised for all the girls from 9 to 26 years of age preferably before marriage or initiation of sexual activity. Vaccination against HPV has been demonstrated to have excellent efficacy.