SCREENING FOR CERVICAL CANCER AMONG WOMEN WHO INJECT DRUGS AND PARTICIPATE IN NEEDLE AND SYRGINE PROGRAMS

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Background:
The cervical cancer screening program, together with adequate human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage, is essential to prevent severe disease. Women who inject drugs (WWID) represent a high-risk, hard-to-reach population facing multiple barriers to screening participation. Low attendance in both breast and cervical cancer screening has been observed in this group, and drug use has been associated with higher rates of cervical cancer. Needle and syringe programs (NSPs) offer a unique opportunity to engage WWID in preventive care. This study assessed adherence to the Swedish screening program among WWID attending NSPs, identify factors associated with non-attendance, and explore attitudes toward HPV self-sampling at NSP.

Methods:
This mixed-methods study included 274 women active at Malmö NSP between 2015-2025. Data included HPV and cervical cytology testing, HIV and hepatitis status including vaccination and STI-testing. Associations between background characteristics, health-seeking behaviors, and screening attendance were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and odds ratios. Semi-structured interviews with 18 participants explored knowledge, attitudes, and barriers to screening.

Results:
The median age was 49 years (IQR 39-57). During the study period, 72% had taken at least one HPV or cytology test, 45% had used HPV self-sampling, and 41% had been tested by a midwife affiliated with NSP. Attendance was positively associated with health-seeking behaviors such as STI-testing, hepatitis B-vaccination, and take-home-naloxone. All-cause mortality was significantly higher among non-attendees (28.9% vs 7.7%). Interviews identified insecure housing, stigma, active addiction, and limited knowledge as key barriers. Most participants expressed willingness to use HPV self-sampling if available at the NSP.

Conclusion:
Screening participation was higher than previously reported, possibly overestimated due to the extended interval. Tailored women's health services at the NSP were positively associated with participation. Structural vulnerability and stigma may hinder attendance. Providing self-sampling kits at NSP poses a promising strategy to maintain and expand preventive care in this population.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: ***See example below:***
The conference collaborators recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.