

BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS FOR INCREASING CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING IN TUVALU

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Background:

Cervical cancer (CC) is the fourth most common cancer in women, with 90% of all related cancer deaths occurring in low-and-middle-income countries. CC is preventable if it is detected and managed effectively. Despite this, national cervical screening programmes are not widely available across the Pacific. However, the Global Strategy for cervical cancer elimination was adopted in 2020 and set targets to be met by countries by 2030. Family Planning Australia has partnered with the Tuvalu Family Health Association, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Cepheid to implement a screen and treat, point of care model and treatment with thermal ablation.

Methods:

The cervical screening and treatment programme was evaluated in October 2023 and included an analysis of screening data and 9 stakeholder interviews. The evaluation intended to identify facilitators and barriers for implementation and upscale of the programme.

Results:

Tuvalu reached a screening percentage of around 76% of eligible women. Therefore, Tuvalu is the first country in the Pacific to achieve the WHO screening target of 70%. Treatment rates were lower at 56% due to women's high refusal rates. Identified programme barriers included delays in equipment deliveries leading to swabs not being tested for prolonged periods, women's concerns regarding having to abstain from sex with their partner after treatment and limited outreach due to the remoteness of some islands. Identified facilitators for screening uptake included having the option for women to self-collect HPV-DNA samples and conducting community outreach to educate people on CC.

Conclusion:

Self-collected HPV DNA testing is an effective and acceptable method of screening. However, more outreach and education may be needed to improve treatment rates. Moreover, strategies to address equipment delays need to be considered.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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