

NCSP Monitoring and Evaluation: Cervical Cancer Case Reviews

Background

The objective of the National Cervical Screening Programme (NCSP) is to reduce the incidence and mortality of invasive cervical cancer by detection and treatment of high grade squamous precursors.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme includes a number of processes such as independent monitoring against a range of indicators and targets; audits of component parts of the programme; monitoring against NCSP policies and standards; monitoring of complaints; reviews of new technologies; and monitoring outcomes such as incidence and mortality.

The New Zealand Cervical Cancer Audit, published in November 2004, was carried out following the *Ministerial Inquiry into the Under-Reporting of Cervical Smear Abnormalities in the Gisborne Region*. One of the recommendations of the audit was about future audits of the NCSP and concluded that “prospective collection of screening histories and clinical data relating to cases as they are notified should occur, with collation and analysis of data carried out at regular intervals once sufficient cases have been accumulated to enable significant results to be produced.”

The review (audit) of screening histories of cervical cancer represents another, albeit very important evaluation activity, as this will not only contribute to evaluating overall programme performance but also to identify possible programme issues for women who have developed invasive cervical cancer despite regular screening. A further objective of the cancer case reviews is to compare the screening histories of women newly diagnosed with cervical cancer (incident cases) with women with no cervical cancer in order to analyse in more depth possible causes of screening problems (case control study). This objective is planned following the first review of cases over the period 2003 to 2006.

Part 4A of the Health Act 1956, as amended in 2004, provides the legal framework for undertaking reviews of cervical cancer cases.

The first publication of this work is provided in the link below:

Monitoring the performance of New Zealand’s National Cervical Screening Programme through data linkage.

NZMJ 30 October 2009, vol 122 No 1305.

http://www.nzma.org.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/17784/Vol-122-No-1305-30-October-2009.pdf

Key results from the analysis of cases between 2003 and 2006 show:

- About half of women who develop squamous cervical cancer have never been enrolled in the NCSP
- About one third are women who have only been screened irregularly
- A decreasing proportion of squamous cancers and an increasing proportion of adenocarcinomas
- Maori, Pacific and Asian women are much less likely than European woman to have been screened
- Among squamous cancers, the proportion diagnosed as microinvasive is increasing
- Comparison with the 2000/2 independent audit of invasive cervical cancer show almost identical results – about 80% of women with squamous or adenosquamous cervical cancer have either never been screened or have an inadequate screening history.