Pinnacle
Midlands Health Network

Tips for increasing cervical screening success

Consider the reasons why women are not being screened

- **Lack of knowledge or understanding** about the benefits of regular screening. Explain that cervical screening is a screening tool, not a test for cancer.
- **Embarrassment** – ask them what would make them more comfortable having a cervical smear.
- **Familiarity with smear-taker** - some women don't want a cervical smear done by someone they know. Suggest alternative providers.

Use your team

Have a nurse champion for cervical screening in your practice, and have as many trained nurse smear takers in your practice as possible. This increases the chance of women being screened and frees up GP time for other appointments.

Use your recall system

Have a robust recall system with timely reminders. Your process should include three contact attempts with at least one phone call.

Get on the phone

It's hard to ignore a screening prompt with a personal phone call. Often women will agree to make an appointment while you are speaking with them on the phone. You can also clear up any misconceptions or answer questions they might have straight away.

Get buy in from staff

Get everyone 'on board' with the importance of regular screening, from clinical staff through to your admin team. Admin staff can take notice of screening alerts and add a message to the appointment so the GP or nurse sees it and remembers to ask the patient.

Let patients know when it's free

If your patient is entitled to a free smear, make sure they know about it. In your recall letters, be sure to add, "This smear will be FREE for you". Many high needs women are entitled to free smears through DHB funding – keep this info handy when you talk to these women.

Be proactive

Use your BPI reports and patient prompts to flag women who are due for a smear. Check the appointment book for women coming in and see if the smear is overdue. Check mothers' smear status when children are coming in for immunisation.

Update your lists

Notify the National Cervical Screening Programme (NCSP) register team about women who no longer need smears, such as those who have had a benign total hysterectomy.

This list has been compiled with information from Stoddard Road Medical Centre's Tips for Increasing Cervical Screening Success, via the Ministry of Health's National Cervical Screening Programme.

Additional general tips

- Hold an evening or weekend smear clinic. Some women have child minding and travel difficulties during office hours or may not be able to take time off work.
- Discuss with other practices in the vicinity whether promotion weeks may work in your area. Often your local NCSP office will support with some goodies if you're doing a promotion week.
- Use the free interpreter service for women accessing smears in the Waikato DHB area.
- Read your regular Waikato DHB NCSP newsletter, which has important updates and details on how to encourage more women to be screened.
- Communicate with your DHB support to screening services to see if they can assist with women not responding.
- Contact Ministry of Health promotion teams for cervical screening – what can they do to help the practices in your area?
- Put together a pack of free goodies to give to women following their cervical smear. Samples are available through this website: www.samplesplus.co.nz

For more information, contact Pinnacle MHN nurse lead, Hilde Mullins, on hilde.mullins@pinnacle.health.nz or 027 552 7783

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