

8.Q. Oral presentations: Access to health services by migrants

Sociocultural factors of cervical cancer screening uptake among migrant women: a mixed methods study

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Cervical cancer has a high mortality in Europe despite being preventable by cervical cancer screening (CCS). Migrant women have a lower CCS attendance compared to non-migrants. This study aims to describe CCS uptake among migrant women in Portugal and explore sociocultural influences. Within a mixed-methods approach, an online survey and focus group discussions (FGs) were conducted. The survey included 655 migrant women and collected data on sociodemographics, attendance and attitudes toward CCS. Four FGs with 12 healthcare workers and a FG with 5 community workers were conducted exploring perceptions on CCS attendance and barriers among migrant women. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive analysis and Chi-Square test and qualitative data through content analysis.

Survey data shows that 24.9% of women never had CCS or had it over 5 years ago, more Asian and African women (51.3% and 36.7%, respectively) ($p < 0.001$). Non-attenders reported significantly more often embarrassment towards CCS (21.7% vs. 18.8% of CCS attenders, $p = 0.002$) and being unaware of their risk of cancer and the relevance of CCS (28.8% vs. 12.5%, $p < 0.001$). Around 24% of non-attenders reported concern with having a consultation with a male doctor. For FGs participants, CCS is a taboo in some communities, particularly African, Asian and Muslim. Lack of information about CCS along with feelings of embarrassment and discomfort related to pap smear and with being seen by a male doctor were referred as reasons for avoidance of CCS. Participants also stated that some women have low autonomy and often their husbands have a key role in deciding whether they should attend CCS. Lack of a preventive mindset was also stated as reason for low CCS attendance. The sociocultural background can influence migrant women's attendance to CCS. A culturally grounded approach is needed to provide tailored information on CCS and to create opportunities to engage migrant communities on CCS and improve their uptake.

Key messages:

- Lack of information, embarrassment and low autonomy hinder some migrant women's attendance to CCS.
- The sociocultural influences on CCS uptake call for a culturally grounded approach to provide tailored information and engage migrant communities on CCS.