

# Letter to the Editor

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## The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer screening

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To the Editor,

We read with interest the Letter to the Editor by Mungmunpuntipantip and Wiwanitkit concerning our paper, where they report high cervical cancer screening and cancer detection rates in their settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in contrast with previous studies from the USA (*Miller et al., 2021*), Canada (Walker et al., 2021), Zimbabwe (Murewanhema, 2021) and West Cameroon (Sormani et al., 2021) that found substantial decreases in cervical cancer screening rates. More recently, an online survey by the International Cancer Screening Network concluded that the first wave of the pandemic had a substantial impact on cancer screening worldwide, with the suspension of services in over 90% of the settings analyzed (Puricelli Perin et al., 2021). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic led to service delays, health and broader infrastructure constraints, even in settings where services continued. In particular, there was a shift in public health priorities to respond to the pandemic, and health system restrictions occurred with shortages in materials for screening as supply chains were impacted. Furthermore, patients may have experienced barriers to access, as well as an unwillingness to attend screening due to fear of contracting COVID-19. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the effect of the pandemic is expectedly heterogeneous across settings, and ongoing monitoring of the impact of the pandemic on cancer screening and the management of backlogs must continue, as well as

determining how service disruptions will translate to clinically meaningful changes in incidence, stage at diagnosis and poorer outcomes.

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## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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