Reviewing your cervical screening history

Information for patients
Gynaecology
Cervical cancer audit

We have written this leaflet to explain a cervical cancer audit which is about to begin within the National Health Service.

What is an audit?

This audit will involve a review of your cervical screening history up to the point when your cervical cancer was diagnosed. This will include a review of:

- Your medical records
- All of your previous cervical screening
- Colposcopy referrals and appointments
- Any biopsies and treatment reports
- Follow-up arrangement plans
- Any letters related to cervical screening

A group of professionals will examine whether your screening history meets national guidance.
Why do you need to audit my records?

The aim of this audit is to monitor the effectiveness of the National Cervical Cancer Screening Programme.

The National Cervical Screening Programme is estimated to save about 4,500 lives each year in England and to prevent about 75% of all cervical cancers. However, screening cannot identify every single case of cancer or pre-cancer. This is for a number of reasons which are related to the screening test that is used and the different forms of treatment that are given.

This audit will help us to identify:

- Areas where the screening programme is working well
- Areas where improvements can be made

This audit may also help:

- Improve the organisation of the screening programme
- Provide a better understanding of the development of cancers and how they are diagnosed

All cases of cervical cancer will be reviewed.
What might the audit show?

In most cases, the audit will show that the correct procedures have been followed and that you received appropriate care. Sometimes, the review may find that one or more steps in the process have not worked as well as they should and may highlight where we could make improvements.

In many cases the cancer will have been detected at the earliest possible stage. Although cervical screening prevents a high percentage of cervical cancers (about 75%), it cannot prevent all of them. The review process aims to highlight any possible areas of weakness so we can make improvements for everyone. Some examples are given below.

Screening cannot always identify abnormal cells on a cervical-sample slide because:

- Sometimes the cells do not look different from normal cells
- There may be very few abnormal cells on the slide
- The person reading the slide may miss the abnormality (this happens occasionally, no matter how experienced the reader is)

Colposcopy (a visual examination of the cervix) cannot always identify abnormal areas of the cervix because:

- The abnormal area might not be visible during the examination
- The abnormal area might not be taken as a sample in a biopsy
- The abnormal cells might be hidden higher up inside the cervix
- Some types of abnormality are simply not easy to identify at a Colposcopy
Why should women bother to go for cervical screening if abnormalities can be missed?

Cervical screening reduces the risk of developing cervical cancer. The cervical screening programme is estimated to save 4500 lives a year nationally and regular screening is the best way to detect early changes to the cervix.

Will this audit affect my care?

No, this audit will not affect the care that you will receive from your doctors in any way.

What happens to the information collected for my review?

We collect screening information as part of an ongoing process. Your information (without your name) goes towards improving the systems of the programme, and to help discover more about how cancers develop and how they are diagnosed and treated. This is done whether or not you want to know the results of the review.

Will my details be kept confidential?

Yes, all the information collected in the audit is confidential and further analysis of your details nationally will be undertaken on an anonymous basis.
Will I be able to have access to the results of my screening audit?

Yes, the results of your review will be available in approximately six months' time. Please let us know if you would like to receive the results of the review of your screening history when it is available. If you wish to receive the review findings, you will be offered an appointment to discuss the results and ask any questions you may have.

What if I don’t want to know the results of the audit now but change my mind later?

We understand this is a difficult time and you may not want to receive the results of the audit now. If you decide that you do want to know the results in the future, please contact your hospital doctor, who will discuss the audit with you.

What if I don’t want to know the results of the audit?

It is completely up to you to decide whether or not you want to know the results of the audit. It will not make any difference to your care.

Can my family ask for the results if I don’t want to know?

No, unless you give permission, we cannot give your relatives access to any details of your medical records.
Who can I contact for more information?

If there is anything that you do not understand about this review or if you would simply like to discuss it in more detail, please let us know and we can arrange an appointment for this. You may also wish to discuss this with your close family or friends, GP or nurse specialist.

You can contact us on **0114 226 8300**. If you know the name of your Consultant or Nurse Specialist, please ask for him/her and the secretary will be able to arrange for them to discuss it with you at a later appointment.

If you would like more information about your referral or treatment please contact:

Specialist Nurse Colposcopist

- **0114 226 8300**