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Changes to cervical screening in Australia: A strategy for a vaccinated population

Bryan Knight

Southern IML Pathology, Australia

The Australian National Cervical Cancer Screening Program commenced in 1982 and reduced the incidence of cervical cancer from 20 to 9 per 100,000 women by 2010. Since then the rate of reduction of cancers leveled off and remained relatively unchanged. In 2007, a National HPV (human papillomaviruses) Vaccine program for girls and young women using quadri-valent vaccine commenced and in 2009 became school-based and expanded to include boys. The nonavalent vaccine will be launched in 2018. Up-take of vaccination is above 80% and the incidence of HPV-related high-grade lesions has fallen in the vaccinated population. A smaller reduction in high-grade lesions in older women suggests a herd-immunity effect. With the reduced incidence of cervical lesions in the population, the low sensitivity of Papanicolaou smears will likely decline. In the HPV vaccine era, the need for a more sensitive and specific test with a high negative predictive value predicated on a change to HPV DNA testing. Numerous international studies show that HPV DNA testing with partial genotyping confers the most cost-effective and effective means of population-based cervical screening. The Renewed HPV DNA Screening Program commenced in December 2017. A new National Cancer Screening Register will change the way women are invited to screening and are recalled for follow-up, aiming to reduce under-screening. Further, a new self-sample HPV DNA test to screen women who, for cultural or other reasons have not been screened, will enhance the efficacy of the program. A further reduction of the incidence of cervical cancer in Australia is anticipated.

Biography

Bryan Knight received medical training at the Godfrey Huggins School of Medicine, Zimbabwe. He trained in pathology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa and obtained his PhD at the same institution. He is an Associate of the College of American Pathologists, Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia, Fellow of the International Academy of Cytology and has a special interest in gynaecologic pathology and cytology. He has worked at UCT in South Africa, was Medical Director at the BC Cancer Agency in Vancouver Canada, and Director of Pathology at the Victorian Cytology Services in Melbourne, Australia.

bryan.knight@southernpath.com.au

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