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## Knowledge attitudes and practices regarding cervical cancer and screening among women visiting primary health care centers in Bahrain

**Ghufran Jassim**

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Medical University of Bahrain, Bahrain

**Background:** Cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers among women, with 80% of the cases occurring in developing countries. Cervical cancer is largely preventable by effective screening programs. This has not been possible with opportunistic screening and its low use in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The objective of this study was to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of women attending primary care health centres for cervical cancer screening.

**Methods:** This was a cross-sectional study of 300 women attending primary health care centres in Bahrain. We used a validated tool comprised of 45 items to collect data through face-to-face interviews between December 2015 and February 2016. Descriptive data are presented for demographic data, and frequency distributions with percentages are presented for each item of the knowledge and attitude questionnaire.

**Results:** The mean age $\pm$ SD of the participants was 37.24 $\pm$ 11.89 years, they were mostly married (221; 73.7%), and had a high school or higher education (261; 87%). Over 64% (194 participants) had never heard of a Pap smear procedure and only 3.7% (11 participants) had heard about the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Nearly 64% (192 participants) believed that a Pap smear was helpful in detecting pre-cancer and cancer of the cervix, and 44.3% (133 participants) believed that they should have a Pap smear at least every three years. Regarding the practice, only 40.7% (122 participants) had a Pap smear in their lifetime. The majority of participants felt embarrassed when examined by a male doctor (250; 83.3%) and few underwent a Pap smear screening if they were never married (69; 23.0%).

**Conclusions:** The participants demonstrated a wide range of knowledge and attitudes towards cervical cancer screening. However, the majority demonstrated positive attitudes towards the HPV vaccine.

### Biography

Ghufran Jassim has completed her graduation in Medicine at Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain. She was trained as a Family Physician and completed the Arab Board and Irish Board in Family Medicine. She has practiced as a Consultant Family Physician in Bahrain since then. She received her Master's degree in Health Policy and Population Studies from Arabian Gulf University. She joined RCSI- Bahrain in 2008, and in 2014 she has completed her PhD in General Practice from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. In 2015 she has completed one year program in Global Clinical Scholars Research Training at Harvard Medical School-Harvard University. Last year she has completed her graduation from the Health Education Profession Diploma program at RCSI. Currently, she is a full time Senior Lecturer at Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland- Bahrain. Her research interests are child and women health, breast cancer, non-communicable diseases and evidence based medicine. She has published many articles in international peer reviewed journals and presented in many international and local conferences. She is the Chief Editor of the *Journal of Bahrain Medical Society*. Recently, she has taken up a new role as the academic coordinator for career development for medical students.

gjassim@rcsi-mub.com

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