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Cervical cancer prevention: Seven decades of milestone achievements

The last 70 years have witnessed several major achievements in the field of cervical cancer prevention. Cervical cancer (CXCA) represents a major burden being the cause of 270000 deaths every year in the world, 80% occurring in the developing countries. The introduction of screening Pap cytology in the mid 50's has led to a 50% reduction of CXCA, wherever it has been implemented. The discovery of the HPV-CXCA connection in the 80's precede the development of molecular technology in the 90's using high risk HPV (HR-HPV) testing for primary CXCA screening. Evidence based science has clearly shown that progression risk to cervical pre-cancer and cancer is HR-HPV type specific, i.e., types 16 and 18 carrying much higher risk (25% < 3 years) compared to 12 other HR-HPV types (5%). This has led to the first US/FDA approved primary screening strategy incorporating genotype for HPV 16 and 18 and reflex Pap cytology for the 12 others that COBAS 4800 tests for. The greatest achievement in the fight against CXCA has been the discovery, development and eventually the commercialization of prophylactic HPV vaccines in the mid-2000. HPV vaccination program combined with HPV primary screening with adequate population coverage have the potential to wipe out most cervical cancers and other HPV related anogenital diseases. Success will be achieved by the implementation of organized, population based and well-funded prevention program.

Biography

Alex Ferenczy is a Professor of Pathology, Obstetrics and Gynecology at McGill University and a Gynecologic Pathologist at the Jewish General Hospital, Montreal for the past 40 years. He has been interested in HPV-related and Endometrial Neoplasia. He authored over 450 articles in scientific journals and textbooks and has been a member of international pathology panels in prospective, randomized controlled HPV screening and vaccine clinical trials and medical therapy for uterine fibroids.

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