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A comparative situation analysis on pre-cancerous lesions among slum and brothel dwelling women and average housewives who fall within the reproductive age group and living in Bangladesh

Samiya Mahmood

Marie Stopes Bangladesh, Bangladesh

According to the global statistics cervical cancer is the 4th most common cancer in women. With over 527,000 new cases being diagnosed every year cervical cancer becomes 8% of all female cancer cases. Cervical cancer claims more than 265,000 lives a year. However the impact of this particular disease is not shared equally around the world. More than 8 in 10 cervical cancer deaths (85%) are occurring in low to middle-income countries. Women living in Africa, South America, and parts of Asia are the hardest hit by this unequal distribution of this disease. Cervical cancer stands at second place in South Asia and in Bangladesh it stands as the leading cause of death by cancer among women. Cervical cancer can be prevented through proper and regular screening. Just by identifying and treating the precancerous lesions any time during the course of its long natural history, we can prevent the potential progression to cervical carcinoma. A precancerous cervical lesion, which is also called an intraepithelial lesion, is an abnormality in the cells of cervix that could eventually develop into cervical cancer. Several screening methods, both traditional as well as the recently developed technologies are currently available to screen women for cervical pre-cancers and cancers. Women living in the slums and brothels are worse victim of accessing health treatments in general. Untapped demand for clean, habitable and decent living conditions among the slum and brothel dwellers can impact women's health, specially the reproductive health. The slum and brothel women have high prevalence of major risk factors for cervical cancer due to common practices such as early age at sexual debut, multiple sexual partners among both genders, having sex without adequate or any protection and not maintaining general highline practices such as regular cleaning, using sanitary pads instead of cloth or cotton, regular checkups etc. A study conducted in a LMIC urban slums, it was seen that only 4.2% women in this study were aware of cervical cancer and none of them believed they were at risk of developing the disease. However, the positive aspect of the study indicated that majority (73.3%) of the women were willing to undergo cervical cancer screening tests. Women living in Bangladesh have lower level of access to treatment in general and one of the major causes behind this is women have less mobility in Bangladesh. Also the living conditions in slums and brothels usually worsen their situation and they become more prone to cervical cancers along with various other health issues. This study would be an attempt to explore the current level of awareness among slum and brothel dwellers regarding cervical cancer and the presence of precancerous lesion among them. The study would also attempt to compare the level on precancerous lesions between women have regular multiple partners and those who do not.

Biography

Samiya Mahmood has completed her MBBS from Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital and her Master of Public Health (MPH) from North South University. Currently, she is running the Cervical Cancer Project working with Marie Stopes Bangladesh.

Samiya.Mahmood@mariestopesbd.org

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