

Resounding success as more than 2000 women show up for pap smear drive

21 April 2018

The mass Pap Smear campaign held at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital today (21 April 2018) has been a resounding success, with more than 2000 women arriving early and waiting in a line to get screened for cervical cancer.

The KZN Department of Health and its partners the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Cancer Association of South Africa had aimed to break a record by performing 1000 Pap Smear tests in one day.

Excitement was palpable throughout the hospital as the target was not only surpassed but doubled.

This Pap Smear drive is part of government's "Phila Ma" campaign, whose objective is to create public awareness about the deadly breast and cervical cancers (cervical cancer causes more deaths among women in South Africa than any other cancer), while promoting screening to ensure early detection and treatment of cancer.

This number of Pap Smears (1950) has never been done in one place on the same day in South Africa or on the African continent. (Fortis Hospital at Vashi, Mumbai, screened over 751 women in an 8 hour marathon screening, setting a Guinness World Record for the highest number of cervical cancer screenings, on 23 December 2012. They beating the earlier record of 350 participants held by Kaiser Permanente, San Diego (USA) achieved on the 29th of January 2011.)

Both cervical and breast cancer are preventable and can be successfully treated if women present at health facilities regularly, and get screened so that interventions can be made early if cancer is found.

One of the mechanisms of testing for cervical cancer is the Pap Smear, which is a simple screening for precancerous cells which could lead to cervical cancer if left untreated. Regular screening can greatly reduce a woman's risk of dying from cervical cancer.

In its quest to detect cervical cancer early, the Department uses Liquid-Based Cytology (LBC), which is considered to be an alternative to conventional cytological investigations. With LBC, a spatula or brush/broom-like device is used to collect cells (in the same way as for conventional cytology), and then the cells are put into a liquid medium and transported to the laboratory for processing and reading .


This ensures a good quality and clean slide which is easier to interpret, and reduces the need for repeat pap smear thus saving costs. With the strengthening of early detection, there will be fewer cases of advanced cancer that will require chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery.

MEC Dhlomo expressed his heartfelt thanks to the scores of women who came to get screened as well volunteers, including specialists, doctors, nurses and ordinary citizens who all made the day a resounding success.

The women who got screened will be issued a return slip and asked to return to their local clinics in six weeks' time to get their results.

Those whose Pap Smear test results show abnormalities (signs of cervical cancer) will be booked for a procedure to remove the cancer using the Large Loop Excision of the Transformational Zone (LLETZ) machines.



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