

For Immediate Release
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Coachella Valley Information for National Cervical Health Awareness Month - Interview Opportunity

*In the Coachella Valley, HARC data has found that about 10.8% of the adult population has cancer. Of those with cancer, only 2.6% have cervical cancer, about 877 women. The low rates of cervical cancer diagnoses in the valley is likely due to proper screening and prevention measures. Here is some more information about cervical cancer and prevention and how the Coachella Valley is affected. **Interview opportunities are available** now through January.*

Palm Desert, CA (January 1, 2018) — With the beginning of a new year, so too brings new year's resolutions and often a commitment to live a happier and healthier life. The new year also marks the beginning of nationally recognized Cervical Health Awareness Month—and another reminder to prioritize health. The United States Congress dedicates the month of January to the widespread awareness about cervical cancer and for informing women on ways they can protect themselves. Considering that all women are at-risk for acquiring this preventable disease, education and proper screening about cervical cancer couldn't be more important.

What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer involves the excessive growth of cells in the cervix, the lower end of the uterus, also known as the womb, and typically affects women over the age of 30. During the early stages of cervical cancer, signs/symptoms may not be present. Once the cancer is more advanced, however, abnormal bleeding or discharge from the vagina may occur. Fortunately, when cervical cancer is detected early, it is highly treatable.

Screening and Prevention

As previously described, cervical cancer is preventable with proper screenings. First, the Pap test (Pap smear) specifically screens for cervical cancer and therefore is an important part of early detection. Pap tests should be done regularly, beginning as early as age 21, as recommended by the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force. In fact, all women between the ages of 21 and 65 are encouraged to continue getting Pap tests as recommended by their doctor. Another screening that is important for preventing cervical cancer is the HPV (human papillomavirus) test. The human papillomavirus is a

disease that is spread through sexual contact, and this disease is the most common cause of cervical cancer. The test for HPV is typically done with a routine Pap smear, so be sure your doctor conducts both of these tests at your annual visit.

Aside from screening, the HPV vaccine can help to protect against various types of HPV that cause cervical cancer, as well as vaginal and vulvar cancers. The HPV vaccine is recommended at an early age of 11 to 12 years, but can be done from age 9 to 26. Ask your doctor if the HPV vaccine is right for you or your children. Despite the effectiveness of the HPV vaccination, regular Pap tests are still important for early detection of the cancer.

How Common is Cervical Cancer in the Coachella Valley?

Around 12,000 women annually acquire cervical cancer in the United States. Of those women, about 4,000 will die from cervical cancer. Cervical cancer, at one point, was the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women, but is no longer the case due to screening tests and early detection.

In the Coachella Valley, HARC data has found that about 10.8% of the adult population has cancer. Of those with cancer, only 2.6% have cervical cancer, about 877 women. The low rates of cervical cancer diagnoses in the valley is likely due to proper screening and prevention measures.

For example, most women (18 years or older), have received a Pap test-- approximately 88.2%. While only 11.8% have not received this test, this is still roughly 18,207 women who are in need of a Pap test to ensure they don't acquire cervical cancer.

As mentioned, it is possible to vaccinate against strands of HPV that cause cervical cancer. Because the HPV vaccine has only been around since 2006, a limited number of adults (age 33 and younger) could have received it. Of these people, over three-quarters (78.5%, 52,950 people) have not received the vaccine, thus, leaving themselves unprotected from the most common cause of cervical cancer.

New year's resolutions are surely about living a healthier and happier life. Make sure that your plans for a healthy 2018 include preventative healthcare to guard against life-threatening illnesses such as cervical cancer.

HARC representatives are available for interviews to speak more about National Cervical Health Awareness Month as well as other research and evaluation services in the field of health, wellness, and quality of life in the Coachella Valley.

About HARC

HARC is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Palm Desert, CA. To learn more about HARC, visit www.HARCdata.org