Abstract

Worldwide, cervical cancer is the third most common cancer in women, and the first or second most common in developing countries. Cervical cancer remains in Colombia the first cause of cancer mortality and the second cause of cancer incidence among women, despite the existence of screening programs during the last 3 decades. Bucaramanga, Manizales and Cali reported rates around 20 per 100,000 and Pasto 27 per 100,000. The Cali cancer registry has reported a progressive decrease in the age standardized incidence and mortality rates of cervical cancer over the past 40 years. Reasons for the decline in incidence and mortality of cervical cancer are multiple and probably include: improvement in socio-economic conditions, decrease in parity rates and some effect of screening programs. Human papilloma Virus is the main cause of cervical cancer, HPV natural history studies have now revealed that HPVs are the commonest of the sexually transmitted infections in most populations. Most HPV exposures result in spontaneous clearance without clinical manifestations and only a small fraction of the infected persons, known as chronic or persistent carriers, will retain the virus and progress to precancerous and cancer. HPV 16 and 18 account for 70% of cervical cancer and the 8 most common types. (HPV 16, 18, 45, 33, 31, 52, 58 and 35) account for about 90% of cervical cancer. Case-control studies also allowed the identification of the following cofactors that acting together with HPV increase the risk of progression from HPV persistent infection to cervical cancer: tobacco, high parity, long term use of oral contraceptives and past infections with herpes simplex type 2 and Chlamydia trachomatis. The demonstration that infection with certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV) is not only the main cause but also a necessary cause of cervical cancer has led to great advances in the prevention of this disease on two fronts: (i) Primary prevention by the use of prophylactic HPV vaccines; and (ii) secondary prevention by increasing the accuracy of cervical cancer screening.

Keywords

Cervix uteri cancer, HPV, HPV vaccines, cancer epidemiology, Cali, Colombia.