

Incidence of Cervical Cancer in Iraq

Zahraa Adnan Ghadhban Al-Ghuraibawi¹, Istikrar Muslem Hade¹ and
Maryam Majid Al-Khaiat²

ABSTRACT

Objective: To examine the common frequency of cervical cancer in Iraqi women.

Study Design: Descriptive study

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted at the Iraqi Cancer Agency and the Cancer Registry data from the Iraqi Ministry of Health provided assistance in data gathering from 1st April 2020 to 31st December 2021.

Methods: The study examined 504 women diagnosed with cervical cancer. Their ages ranged from 20 to over 80 years. The data analysis employed descriptive statistics to determine the frequency, proportion, and incidence of cervical cancer.

Results: The cervical cancer was predominantly caused by human papillomavirus in women in 2020 (1.29%) and 2021 (2.1%). In 2020, the number of cases of cervical cancer in Iraqi women was predominantly concentrated in the age groups 50-54 years [33 (13.693%)] and 55-59 years [33 (13.693%)] while in 2021, the majority of the cases were concentrated in the age group 50-54 years [47 (17.87%)]. Many women who have cervical cancer in Iraq in 2020 and 2021 are from households who have a poor socioeconomic position (71.78%) and (70.72%), respectively.

Conclusion: The number of Iraqi women who have cancer of the cervix is growing in 2021. The women between the ages of 50-54 and 55-59, as well as those with lower socioeconomic position, are at higher risk of getting cervical cancer.

Key Words: Incidence, Cervical Cancer, Iraq

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INTRODUCTION

Cervical cancer is responsible for nearly 7% of the deaths of women globally. Many occurrences (85%) occur in underdeveloped nations that have insufficient preventative measures in place.¹

Cervical cancer is the second most frequent kind of cancer on the world. Behind breast and lung cancer, it is the third most common form of cancer in women after these two diseases. Around 90% of the fatalities connected with cervical cancer occur in poor nations.²

The most typical dangers include early sexual debut, many sexual partners, and a reduced immune system. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the principal causal factor in the majority of instances and causes 99.7% of the cases of cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is one of the most prevalent kinds of cancer in women.^{3,4}

¹. Department of Iraqi National Cancer Research Center, University of Baghdad, Iraq.

². Department of Iraq Natural History Research Center and Museum, University of Baghdad, Iraq

Correspondence: Zahraa Adnan Ghadhban Al-Ghuraibawi, Assistant Lecturer, Iraqi National Cancer Research Center, University of Baghdad, Iraq.

Contact No: +9647707356315

Email: zahraa.a.315@bccru.uobaghdad.edu.iq

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Several factors increase the woman's probability of having cervical cancer, including viral infections (such as the HPV, HIV, and HSV), multiple pregnancies, early sexual activity, multiple partners, smoking, low socioeconomic status, a diet low in antioxidants, poor hygienic practices, long term use of oral contraceptives, and diseases that detriment the immune system.⁵

Every year, roughly 244 new instances of cervical cancer are discovered in Iraq, this makes it the 13th most prevalent form of cancer among women. Around 159 women are died by cervical cancer every year, thus making it the 12th largest cause of cancer death in women.⁶

In Iraq, roughly 13.8 million women between the ages of 15 and 64 are vulnerable to the development of cervical cancer. Every year, roughly 286 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 193 are died by the illness. This malignancy is the 15th most prevalent kind of cancer in Iraqi women, and the 12th most common type in women between the ages of 15 years and 44 years.⁷

The prevalence of HPV in the Iraqi population is scarce. However, in West Asia, including Iraq, it is expected that 2.5% of women in the general population are infected with HPV 16/18 at any given time, and 72.4% of the invasive malignancies of the cervix are caused by reoccurring HPV 16 or 18.⁸

The increased death rate worldwide due to cervical cancer can be minimised by pursuing a complete strategy that includes prevention, early detection, and

effective screening and treatment programs. Vaccines can prevent the common kind of HPV that causes cancer, and they can greatly lessen the probability of cervical cancer.⁶

Similar to other nations in the Islamic religion, Iraq has a low prevalence of cervical cancer, although the majority of cases are advanced and have a poor chance of recovery. The incidence of CIN lesions in patients with gynecological problems in Iraq is not negligible. The frequency is 1.20/100,000 P.⁷

Because of its protracted phase of pre-invasion, cervical cancer is a disease that can be avoided. Early detection and successful therapy are both attainable with extensive monitoring.⁸

The screening of cytology for pre-cancerous alterations and the treatment of these abnormalities, is useful in decreasing the incidence of cervical cancer and reducing its mortality. The Pap smear is a simple, inexpensive, and non-invasive test that is part of the usual gynecological check-up in primary care that identifies abnormalities that might lead to cervical cancer. Combined with a regular screenings program and adequate follow-up, the Pap test can lower the death risk of cervical cancer by up to 80%.^{9,10}

The purpose of this research was to calculate the frequency of cervical cancer in Iraqi women throughout the timeframe of 2020 and 2021 based on existing documented information.

METHODS

This descriptive study was acquired from the Iraqi Cancer Registry and the Iraqi Ministry of Health's records and administrative systems from from 1st April 2020 to 31st December 2021 vide letter No.135 dated 11-3-2020. The total number of registered women with cervical cancer in 2020 was 241 and in 2021 were 263. As a consequence, the total number of participants recruited for the study was 504 women that were diagnosed with cervical cancer. Their ages varied from 20 to over 80 years. The data was entered and analyzed through SPSS-25.

RESULTS

The highest incidence rate of HPV-related cancers among women is accounted for cervical cancer for the year of 2020 (1.29%) and the year of 2021 (2.1%) [Table 1]. There is unfortunately no evidence on the existence of official national cervical screening practices and recommendations (Table 2). Majority of the instances of cervical cancer in Iraqi women in 2021 were in the 50-54 year range [47 cases (17.87%)] (Table 3). Most of women with cervical cancer is belong to families of low socioeconomic status for the year of 2020 (71.78%) and the year of 2021(70.72%) [Table 4].

Table No.1: Crude incidence rates of cervical cancer

Type of cancer	2020	2021
Cervical cancer	1.29%	2.1%

Table No.2: Practice and recommendations for cervical cancer screening

Existence of Official National Recommendations	2020	2021
The recommended start year	NO	NO
Active invitation screening	NO	NO
Age at screening (years), primary screening test used, and screening interval or frequency	NO	NO

NO = No evidence

Table No.3: Distribution of women with cervical cancer by age

Age (years)	2020	2021
20-24	1 (0.42%)	2 (0.76%)
25-29	4 (1.66%)	2 (0.76%)
30-34	7 (2.90%)	8 (3.04%)
35-39	24 (9.96%)	22 (8.36%)
40-44	27 (11.20%)	22 (8.36%)
45-49	27 (11.20%)	36 (13.69%)
50-54	33 (13.69%)	47 (17.87%)
55-59	33 (13.69%)	38 (14.45%)
60-64	27 (11.20%)	30 (11.41%)
65-69	15 (6.22%)	29 (11.03%)
≥ 80	14 (5.81%)	27 (10.27%)
Total	241 (100%)	263 (100%)

Table No.4: Socioeconomic status

Year	Socioeconomic status		
	Low (7-10)	Moderate (11-25)	High (26-29)
2020	173 (71.78%)	38 (15.77%)	30 (12.45%)
2021	186 (70.72%)	45 (17.11%)	32 (12.17%)

DISCUSSION

The cervical cancer incidence rate in Iraqi women was 1.29% in 2020, this climbed to 2.1% in 2021 in the present study. There are various explanations of this rise, including a lack of knowledge of how to avoid cervical cancer and a lack of comprehension of the screening recommendations and practices of cervical cancer.

The increase in occurrences of cervical cancer in Iraq in 2021, the country's incidence rate is still lower than the global average given by the World Cancer Research Fund International.¹³ The cervical cancer continues to be a serious concern for women globally, thus underscores the requirement of more effective preventive and treatment strategies.¹⁴

This study showed that cervical cancer predominantly affects women in the 50-54 and 55-59 age ranges. The women in these age groups may have an increased likelihood of getting cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is most typically diagnosed in women between the ages of 35 and 44, with an average age of diagnosis of 50 years. This condition is rare in young women under the age of 20. Many older ladies don't understand that their likelihood of developing cervical cancer increases with age. Above 20% of the incidences of cervical cancer occur in women who are above the age of 65. However, these malignancies are infrequent in women who participate in routine cervical cancer prevention before the age of 65.¹⁵ The National Cancer Institute has reported that the age distribution of women who are diagnosed with cervical cancer is as follows: less than 0.1% are under 20 years old, 13.7% are between 20 and 34 years old, 22.8% are between 35 and 44 years old, 22.4% are between 45 and 54 years old, 19.7% are between 55 and 64 years old, 12.2% are between 65 and 74 years old, 6.4% are between 75 and 84 years old, and 2.6% are over 85 years old. These figures suggest that women between the ages of 35 and 44 have a greater likelihood of having cervical cancer.¹⁶

Majority of women who are diagnosed with cervical cancer have socioeconomic situations that are lower than usual. This study confirms the idea that women from disadvantaged families have a higher risk of getting cervical cancer than other women because of their lesser understanding of preventative strategies and restricted access to healthcare. The risk of cervical cancer is higher in nations with low wealth. This indicates the large inequalities caused by the lack of national coverage of HPV vaccinations, cervical cancer prevention and treatment, as well as social and economic concerns.¹⁷

The evidence demonstrates that a poor socioeconomic position is connected to greater levels of cervical cancer incidence and death. The most significant indicators in socioeconomic relevance connected with cervical cancer are income and education. Those with less education have worse health literacy, which leads in their not identifying the risk or protective factors connected with cervical cancer. Inadequate financial resources may hamper women's capacity to obtain healthcare services, particularly in respect to cervical cancer screening and proper treatment.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

Cervical cancer is also present in adult women. The number of cases of cervical cancer in Iraqi women is increasing in 2021. The women with a lower socioeconomic position have a greater likelihood of getting cervical cancer.

Recommendations

1. Screening is essential so that women can check for changes in cervical cancer regularly and always have a check-up by a doctor.
2. Educational initiatives intended for women can be created, implemented, and modified to increase their understanding of how to prevent cervical cancer.
3. National studies with multiple characteristics can be conducted.

Author's Contribution:

Concept & Design or acquisition of analysis or interpretation of data:	Zahraa Adnan Ghadhban Al-Ghuraibawi, Istikrar Muslem.Hade
Drafting or Revising Critically:	Maryam Majid Al-Khaiat
Final Approval of version:	All the above authors
Agreement to accountable for all aspects of work:	All the above authors

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