

GYNECOLOGIC CANCER

Sept 2009
Issue 8

“WIKI” ALERT

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“Wiki” is the Hawaiian language word for “fast.” The intent of these “Wiki” Alerts are to provide brief informational resources about chronic disease issues that impact Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AAs and NHPIs).



Cervical Cancer

Basic Facts

According to the American Cancer Society, in 2008 more than 11,000 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and almost 4,000 died from it in the U.S. Almost all cervical cancer begins as an infection from a virus called the human papillomavirus (HPV). It is sexually transmitted and common among both women and men. In the U.S., over 6 million women and men are infected with HPV each year (American Cancer Society, 2009). There are over 100 different kinds of HPVs; while some are low-risk, others are high-risk and linked to cancer.

AA and NHPI Statistics

* While incidence rates for all other major racial groups have fallen over the years, rates of cervical

cancer among Asian American women show small but significant increases (Ries et al, 1999).

- * In the continental U.S., cervical cancer rates are highest among Laotian, Samoan, and Vietnamese women, exceeding rates among non-Hispanic white women (Miller et al, 2008).
- * The incidence rate for invasive cervical cancer, much of which is preventable by screening, is four times higher among Vietnamese women than in all AA and NHPI populations combined (National Cancer Institute, 2003).
- * Among most Asian American groups, the percentage reporting a Pap test in the past three years is lower among those with limited English proficiency compared to those who are English proficient (Ponce et al, 2003).

September is
Gynecologic
Cancer
Awareness
Month

If you are uninsured or underinsured, contact your state health department to see if you are eligible for their low-cost or free cervical cancer screenings. To find your local program, go to www.cdc.gov/cancer/NBCCEDP/.

Ovarian Cancer

Basic Facts

Ovarian cancer is the leading cause of gynecologic cancer deaths among American women. Most ovarian cancer develops after menopause; half of ovarian cancers are found in women older than age 65. And only 24% of ovarian cancers are diagnosed at an early stage, when the disease is confined to the ovary (National Women's Health Resource Center, 2003). When the cancer has spread to other parts of the body, it's difficult to treat successfully. For these reasons, ovarian cancer is the most fatal of all cancers involving a woman's reproductive tract. A major risk of getting ovarian cancer is a personal history of breast, uterine, or colon cancer.

AA and NHPI Statistics

- * Incidence is low among Asian women, but this is probably due in part to environmental factors; their rate rises when they move to Western countries and adopt the lifestyles and diets of their new location (The Johns Hopkins Ovarian Cancer Center of Excellence, 2009).
- * AA and NHPI women are less likely than Caucasian women to have a comprehensive health care plan, which may prevent them from receiving early diagnosis and proper treatment for ovarian cancer (Moore, 2001).
- * Hawaiian and Alaskan native women have overall ovarian cancer mortality rates that are at least 40% higher than other minority populations (Moore, 2001).

To find out more about ovarian cancer, please visit:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1-800-CDC-INFO
www.cdc.gov/cancer
- National Cancer Institute
1-800-4-CANCER
www.cancer.gov
- National Ovarian Cancer Coalition
1-888-OVARIAN
www.ovarian.org

Vulvar Cancer

Basic Facts

Vulvar cancer is an uncommon cancer of the outer surface area of female genitalia. In 2009, an estimated 3,580 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with vulvar cancer and approximately 900 deaths from this disease. Vulvar cancer accounts for about 4% of cancers in female reproductive organs (American Cancer Society, 2009).

Its incidence is increasing in young women because of its association with HPV.

AA and NHPI Statistics

- * The age-adjusted incidence rate for vulvar cancer for AA and NHPI women is 0.4 per 100,000 women (Saraiya et al, 2008).
- * Only two-thirds of Korean women in the U.S. report receiving a Pap test in the last three years (McCracken et al, 2007).

Women with vulvar cancer may experience the following symptoms: a lump or growth in or on the vulvar area, persistent itching, painful urination, and wart-like growths.

Uterine Cancer

Basic Facts

All women are at risk for uterine cancer, but the risk increases with age. Most uterine cancers, also known as endometrial cancer, are found in women who are going through menopause. In 2005, 37,465 women in the U.S. had uterine cancer, making it the fourth most common cancer for women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). The most common type of uterine cancer is called endometrial cancer because it forms in the lining of the uterus, called the endometrium.

AA and NHPI Statistics

* The rate of endometrial cancer among Asian women living in Asia is one-third to one-fifth

of that among women in Western countries (Beauchamp, 2004).

- * Japanese women have the highest incidence rates for uterine cancer among all Asian subgroups. Japanese women also have the highest mortality rates for uterine cancer (Kwong et al, 2005).
- * Regular intake of soy foods is associated with a reduced risk of endometrial cancer (Xu et al, 2004).

Talk to your doctor if you have these symptoms: vaginal bleeding, difficult/painful urination, pain during intercourse, and/or pain in the pelvic area. The most common sign of uterine cancer is bleeding that is not normal because of when it happens or how heavy it is.

These women are **at risk** for developing uterine cancer:

Obese women, women who have few or no children, women who began menstruating at a young age, those who had a late menopause, women with or at risk for hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer, and women of high socioeconomic status.

Vaginal Cancer

Basic Facts

Vaginal cancer is rare. Only 1% of women with a cancer of the reproductive system have vaginal cancer. In 2009, an estimated 2,160 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with vaginal cancer. It is estimated that 770 deaths from this disease will occur this year (American Cancer Society, 2009). There are two main types of vaginal cancer: squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma. The overall five-year survival rate for vaginal cancer is around 50%. When

found in the early stages, survival rate increases.

AA and NHPI Statistics

- * The age-adjusted incidence rate for vaginal cancer for AA and NHPI women is 0.3 per 100,000 women (Wu et al, 2008).
- * AA and NHPI women, as well as older women, had a high proportion of late-stage vaginal cancer and a low five-year survival rate (Wu et al, 2008).

Patient Information Resources

- Gynecologic Cancer Foundation
1-800-444-4441
www.thegcf.org
- Rare Cancer Alliance
www.rare-cancer.org
- National Organization for Rare Disorders
1-800-999-6673
www.rarediseases.org

Prevention Methods

Type of gynecological cancer ***	Pap test	HPV vaccine*	Delaying first sexual intercourse until late teens or older	Avoiding intercourse with multiple partners	Birth control pills	No smoking	Other
Cervical	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Ovarian**					✓	✓	Having given birth
Uterine					✓	✓	Having given birth
Vaginal	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Vulvar	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

*For more information about the HPV vaccine, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/default/htm.

**If you have any unexplained signs or symptoms of ovarian cancer, ask your doctor if you should have a test, such as a rectovaginal pelvic exam, a transvaginal ultrasound, or a CA-125 blood test.

***To decrease risk of cancer, stop smoking, eat a healthy diet and exercise.