

# TURNING THE TIDE

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING AMONG WOMEN WHO ARE UNDER-SCREENED

*A white paper from the Advancing Cervical CancEr ScreeningS (ACCESS) International Consensus Group on Cervical Cancer.*

**The ACCESS Consensus Group is a multi-disciplinary group of leading experts in cervical cancer and women's health, and urgently calls on governments and healthcare authorities to:**

- Develop national action plans for cervical cancer elimination within a defined timeframe
- Increase efforts to raise awareness of cervical cancer screening in partnership with healthcare professionals and communities
- Improve the accessibility of cervical cancer screening for under-screened populations

### AUTHORS

The ACCESS Consensus Group consists of 10 members bringing diverse and complementary expertise in cervical health from across the **European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.**

#### Co-chairs

- **Samantha Dixon**, Former Co-Chair, ACCESS Consensus Group, Former CEO, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, UK
- **Prof. Philippe Descamps**, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University Hospital Angers, Former Vice President of FIGO, and President of International Relations Committee of CNGOF, France

#### Members

- **Dr. Francesc Xavier Bosch Jose**, Clinical oncologist and epidemiologist, Co-founder, HPV Information Center (ICO and IARC), Director, HPV World (HPW), Spain
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**“Urgent action is needed to address low and declining screening participation rates and to stop women dying from this largely preventable disease.”**

# The ACCESS Consensus Group's six key recommendations and best practice examples

## 1 National Elimination Plans

Develop cervical cancer national elimination plans with goals for elimination by a defined date, including ambitious national screening programme participation targets at the population level.

Canada represents a best practice example, having set an ambition to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040! Its action plan targets an overall screening participation rate of 90% and an equity target of no less than 80% of eligible individuals in any identifiable group.

## 2 Education

Implement targeted and culturally relevant education, information and awareness-raising initiatives, to improve participation in cervical cancer screening with a specific focus on the under-screened population.

From the results of an education campaign in Australia, a 27% increase in the uptake of cervical cancer screening across all socio-economic groups was reported.<sup>2</sup>

## 3 Accessibility

Improve accessibility of cervical cancer screening through:

- Self-sampling for under-screened women only (due to implementation challenges<sup>3</sup>, and a CIN2+ relative detection estimated as low as 76% in the largest, population-based, real-world study to date<sup>4,5</sup>)
- Optimisation of the invitation system
- Providing non-GP locations for screening and screening appointments at varied times
- Carrying out outreach and information campaigns about the availability of cervical cancer screening
- Adequate funding and staffing of primary or obstetrics and gynaecology care.

In Canada, the CervixCheck cervical cancer screening programme conducted a pilot study which showed that screening participation could be improved among unscreened women by offering a mailed HPV self-sampling kit.<sup>6</sup>

## 4 Healthcare Professionals

Provide updated training and education to enable healthcare professionals to raise awareness of screening by counselling women on HPV infection and the importance of cervical cancer screening and to encourage a partnership approach between healthcare professionals and patients in cervical cancer care.

In Spain, the Catalan Institute of Oncology has modern communication strategies to update healthcare professionals on cervical cancer prevention such as the Cervical Cancer and HPV Programme of e-oncologia.<sup>7</sup>

In the UK, "Pay for Performance" schemes support GPs who are granted payments representing up to 20% of their income for compliance with target indicators set across the spectrum of clinical activity.<sup>8</sup>

## 5 Patient Advocacy

Encourage and fund the creation of national cervical cancer patient advocacy groups and cervical cancer prevention coalitions to support patients and play a valuable role in education and awareness about cervical cancer prevention.

The French patient association "1000femmes1000vies" developed an information leaflet to educate women about key facts and figures surrounding cervical cancer and what one can do to prevent it, including highlighting the importance of screening.<sup>9</sup>

## 6 Health Insurance

One of the main barriers to participation is the cost due to lack of or insufficient health insurance coverage. Health insurance policies should cover all available screening options and programmes that provide access to cervical cancer screening to those who do not have health insurance should be available.

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