

28 Increase Cervical Cancer Screening Levels

Situation

Early detection and early intervention are critical for the prevention of cervical cancer. In Japan, out of the 8,000 cases of cervical cancer diagnosed annually, roughly 2,500 women will die from the disease. Japan has seen a sharp rise in the number of patients with cervical cancer in their twenties and thirties, and a growing mortality rate. Cervical cancer is the only type of cancer whose incidence can be reduced with a vaccine, which is already in use in more than 100 countries and has recently become available in Japan. Because the human papilloma virus (HPV) is the dominant cause of cervical cancer, regular Pap testing, early HPV testing when recommended, and early vaccination can work together effectively to prevent cervical cancer. In the United States, regular Pap testing has been successfully adopted and recognized as one of the most effective cancer screening tests.

Current Policy

In 2009, the government of Japan made progress in improving cervical cancer screening by announcing a new five-year program to send coupons for free screening to women aged 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40. To date, only a small fraction of the target group has been receiving free screening due to low public awareness and the fact that the free screening cannot be received as part of the annual screenings provided by private health insurance associations. In 2011, the Japanese government took a further step by funding the implementation of a National Cancer Initiative, targeting breast, colon, and cervical cancer. To further enhance cervical cancer prevention, HPV vaccination for girls between 10 and 14 years of age was also funded. In 2010, the cervical cancer screening rate in Japan was only 24.3 percent, less than half the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average for member countries.¹ Recent efforts combined with various national and regional awareness initiatives have helped to increase the screening rate to 37.7 percent in 2013; however, Japan's cervical cancer

screening rate remains low compared to the OECD average and especially when compared to other developed countries which have screening rates of over 80 percent. Widespread public confusion remains concerning how vaccination and cervical cancer testing combine to prevent cervical cancer.

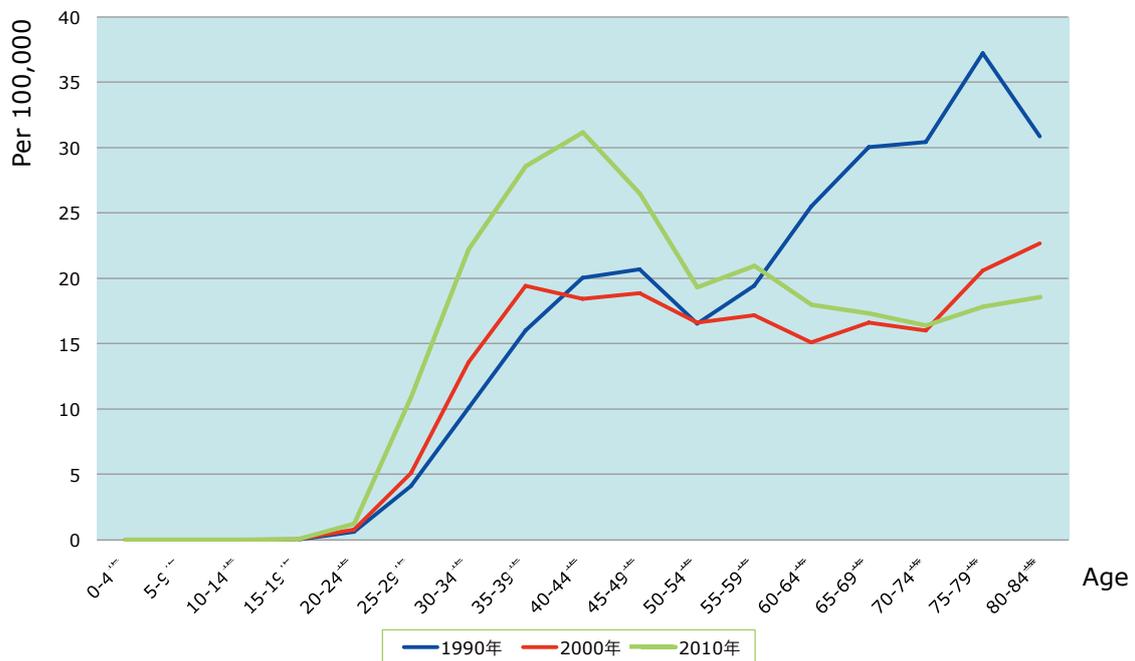
Recommendations

- Amend the National Health Insurance Law of Japan to fund and include cervical cancer testing in health exams for all women between the ages of 20 and 40.
- Increase funding for raising cervical cancer awareness to meet Japan's goal of a 50 percent cervical cancer screening rate by 2017.
- Increase funding to better educate women on how the three latest technologies to fight cervical cancer — HPV vaccination, HPV testing, and Pap testing based on liquid-based cytology (LBC), all currently available in Japan — can work together to achieve comprehensive cervical cancer prevention.
- Promote use of the latest cervical cancer-fighting technologies, including HPV vaccination, HPV testing and, most critically, LBC cancer cell screening, to increase accuracy and reduce the amount of retesting for cervical cancer. In particular, the combined use of HPV testing and cytology has become a trend in recent years and, therefore, it is recommended that the conventional cytology method be converted to liquid-based cytology as soon as possible as a first step toward more universal adoption.
- Promote the use of automated screening systems, which are commonly used in the United States and Europe to ensure accuracy control; and promote streamlined operations for the increased manpower expected in labs as a result of an increased screening rate in the future.

Reference

1. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. 2011. National lifestyle basic research report (July 12). www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/2r9852000001igt0.html.

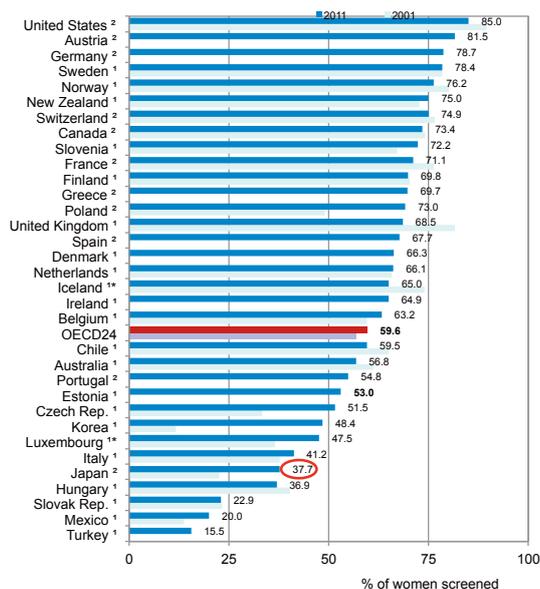
28. Incidence Rate of Cervical Cancer (including intraepithelial carcinoma)



Source: Cancer Information Service, National Cancer Center, Japan

28. Cervical Cancer Screening Rate in Developed Countries

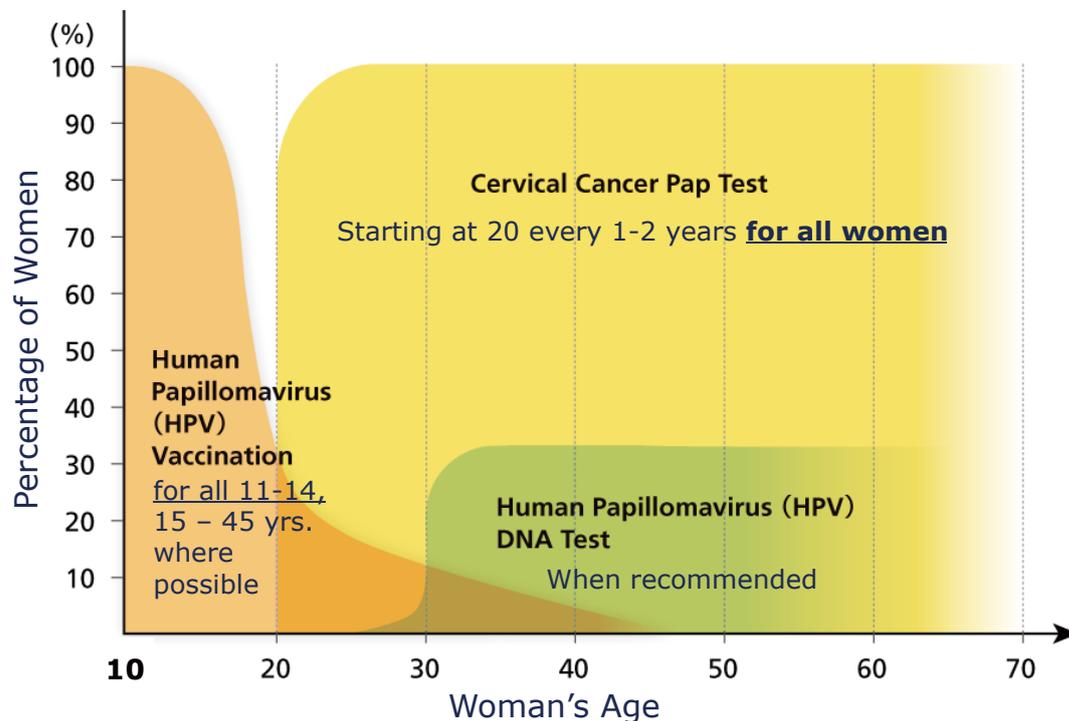
Japan's Cervical Cancer Prevention Problem is the Low Screening Rate



Source: OECD, 2013

The screening rate has improved since 2010; however, it remains low compared to the OECD average and other developed countries.

28. Comprehensive Cervical Cancer Prevention Three Technologies Work Together



28. Comprehensive Cervical Cancer Prevention

After Age 10: Get HPV Vaccination !
After Age 20: Get Periodic Screening !

