

Efforts to Improve Detection, Treatment, and the Burden of Cervical Cancer

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Received date: March 11, 2024, Manuscript No. IPMCR-24-18992; **Editor assigned date:** March 13, 2024, PreQC No. IPMCR-24-18992 (PQ); **Reviewed date:** March 27, 2024, QC No. IPMCR-24-18992; **Revised date:** April 06, 2024, Manuscript No. IPMCR-24-18992 (R); **Published date:** April 13, 2024, DOI: 10.36648/2471-299X.10.2.43

Citation: Dumpy A (2024) Efforts to Improve Detection, Treatment, and the Burden of Cervical Cancer. Med Clin Rev Vol.10 No.2: 43.

Description

Cervical cancer remains a significant health concern globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where resources for prevention and treatment are often limited. In Ethiopia, it stands as the second most common cancer among women. Despite efforts to improve detection and treatment, the burden of cervical cancer continues to rise, impacting not only physical health but also Quality of Life (QoL) for affected individuals. According to the latest statistics from GLOBOCAN 2020, there were approximately 6,294 new cases of cervical cancer reported annually in Ethiopia, resulting in 4,884 deaths. These numbers underscore the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the growing crisis. One of the primary challenges in managing cervical cancer is the late presentation of cases, often in advanced stages where treatment options are limited and prognosis is poor.

Treatment modalities

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) staging system categorizes the disease into four stages, with patients in advanced stages (IIB to IVB) facing debilitating symptoms such as pelvic or lower back pain, flank pain, and lower limb edema. Additionally, invasion of surrounding organs like the rectum and bladder further complicates the management and adds to the patient's distress. Treatment modalities for cervical cancer range from surgery and radiation therapy to chemotherapy, or a combination thereof, depending on the stage of the disease and individual patient factors. While early-stage cervical cancer may be managed with single modality treatment, advanced cases often require a multidisciplinary approach. However, regardless of the treatment regimen, patients experience physical and emotional challenges that significantly impact their QoL. Recognizing the importance of assessing baseline QoL prior to treatment, a deeper

understanding of pre- and post-treatment experiences is essential. Despite advancements in cancer care, there is a notable gap in research focusing on QoL among Ethiopian women diagnosed with advanced-stage cervical cancer. To address this gap, a recent study aimed to evaluate the pre- and post-treatment QoL of women diagnosed with advanced cervical cancer in Ethiopia.

Cervical cancer

The findings shed light on the profound impact of the disease and its treatment on various aspects of life, including physical well-being, emotional health, and social functioning. The study highlights the need for holistic approaches to cancer care, integrating psycho-oncological support throughout the treatment journey. By addressing not only the medical aspects but also the psychosocial needs of patients, healthcare providers can enhance overall outcomes and improve QoL for those affected by cervical cancer. Moving forward, efforts to strengthen cancer prevention, early detection, and access to comprehensive care are paramount. By prioritizing research and initiatives aimed at improving QoL for cervical cancer patients, Ethiopia can make significant strides in mitigating the impact of this devastating disease on individuals and communities alike. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of tailored interventions to address the unique challenges faced by women with advanced cervical cancer in Ethiopia. Culturally sensitive approaches that take into account socioeconomic factors, access to healthcare, and psychosocial support systems are crucial for improving overall outcomes and enhancing QoL. By amplifying awareness, investing in education, and fostering collaboration between healthcare providers, policymakers, and communities, Ethiopia can strengthen its response to cervical cancer. Empowering women through early detection programs, advocacy initiatives, and support networks can also play a pivotal role in reducing the burden of the disease and improving QoL for those affected.