

## January is Cervical Health Awareness Month!

### Significant Disparities Remain in Cervical Cancer Incidence and Mortality

The American Cancer Society projects that in the US, 11,270 new cases and 4,070 deaths occurred from cervical cancer in 2009. Cervical cancer was once one of the most common causes of cancer death among women in the US. But since 1955 the number of deaths from cervical cancer has decreased by 60% as the result of the advent of the Pap test and institution of organized cervical cancer screening programs.

#### Incidence and Mortality

However, today, significant disparities are apparent in the incidence and mortality of cervical cancer. In Los Angeles County, the incidence of cervical cancer decreases directly with increasing socioeconomic status (SES). Women in the lowest SES quintile have the highest age adjusted rate of cervical cancer at 20/100,000 population and women in the highest SES quintile have the lowest age-adjusted rate at 7/100,000. Racial/ethnic disparities also exist, with the incidence of cervical cancer as high as 14.3/100,000 among Latinas, compared to 9.3/100,000 among Asian/Pacific Islander women, 7.6/100,000 among black women and 7.5/100,000 among white women.(1) The mortality rate of cervical cancer among women in Los Angeles, 3.3/100,000, remains higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal of 2.0/100,000.(2)

#### Screening

One of the most important contributing factors to developing cervical cancer is receiving inadequate screening in the past. In a meta-analysis of 42 articles, it was found that 54% of women diagnosed with cervical cancer had inadequate screening in the past. In fact, 42% of the women had never been screened.(3) In Los Angeles County, overall cervical cancer screening rates in 2007 were at 84% which remain below the Healthy People 2010 goal of 90%. Furthermore, the rates were as low as 77% among uninsured women 18-64 years compared to 86% among women on Medi-Cal and 90% among privately insured women. (4)

**Cervical cancer is a preventable** disease that no woman should have to die from. Disparities in cervical cancer incidence and mortality need to be addressed by providing equal access to screening programs for low income uninsured women of all ethnicities.

#### Free screenings available in Los Angeles County

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, **Office of Women's Health** provides appointments for free or low cost Pap tests to low income uninsured women via our multi-lingual hotline, **1-800-793-8090**. Services are available in seven languages, English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese and Armenian.

For more information on the **Office of Women's Health**, please visit our website: [www.publichealth.org/owh](http://www.publichealth.org/owh) or [www.preventionmatters.org](http://www.preventionmatters.org)

For more information on cervical cancer, please click on the attached link from the National Cervical Cancer Coalition. [http://newsinfusion.com/video\\_details.php?videoId=409#](http://newsinfusion.com/video_details.php?videoId=409#)

#### Sources

1 The Los Angeles County Cancer Surveillance Program, University of Southern California, SES - 1998-2002 data, Incidence - 1988-2007 data.

2 The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Office of Health Assessment & Epidemiology, Data Collection and Analysis Unit, 2006 Data.

3 Spence, et al. Preventive Med. 2007. 45;93-106.

4 The Los Angeles county Department of Public Health, Office of Health Assessment & Epidemiology, Health Assessment Unit, 2007 Los Angeles County Health survey.