



CWHS

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2008 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Cervical cancer is an entirely preventable disease. Regular Papanicolaou (Pap) test screening is an effective way to detect cervical cancer early. It has been reported that there are three major categories of factors associated with screening, which are: i) sociodemographic characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, education, and age; ii) psychosocial influences such as knowledge, risk perception, and the practice of other health behaviors; and iii) health system factors such as health insurance coverage, physician recommendation, and the usual source of health care.¹ Having health insurance is positively correlated with regular cancer screening.

Government programs for eligible women offer regular screening services to underserved populations.² One is the *National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program* funded by the Cancer Detection Section's *Cancer Detection Programs: Every Woman Counts*, which provides free cervical cancer screening services to uninsured, underinsured, and low-income California women.

This report focuses on barriers to cervical cancer screening among never or rarely screened women in California. Data from the California Women's Health Survey for 2008 were used in this analysis. Respondents were asked if they had ever had a Pap test and if so, how long it had been since their last one. Women ages 25 to 64 were analyzed by age (25 to 44 years or 45 to 64 years) and their health insurance status. Respondents were categorized by the length of time since they

were last screened. Those reporting that their last Pap test was more than five years ago or that they had never been screened were grouped and described as never or rarely screened. The survey responses in these analyses were weighted by race/ethnicity and age distribution to reflect the 2000 California adult female population. Women were excluded from the analysis if they refused to respond or answered that they did not know when asked if they have had a hysterectomy. Chi-square tests were used to test the significance of differences in responses between the groups.

- Data showed that in California, 91.8 percent of women ages 25 to 64 were screened for cervical cancer in the past 3 years, 3.2 percent in the past 4 to 5 years, and 5.0 percent had never or rarely been screened.
- For those with health insurance, 3.6 percent had never or rarely been screened compared to 11.6 percent of those without health insurance ($P < .01$).
- In both age groups, the percentage of never or rarely screened women was higher for those without health insurance compared to those with insurance ($P < .01$; see Figure 1). The rate for women ages 45 and under who did not have insurance was almost twice the rate of women with insurance (6.2 percent vs. 3.2 percent). The rate for women ages 45 to 64 who did not have insurance was over five times as high as the rate for those with insurance (23.2 percent vs. 4.1 percent).

Is Lack of Health Insurance a Barrier to Cervical Cancer Screening? Experience of California Women Ages 25 to 64 Who are Never or Rarely Screened, 2008

California Department of Public Health
Cancer Detection Section
Evaluation and Research Unit

Public Health Message:
Even though a small percentage of women surveyed in 2008 were never or rarely screened for cervical cancer, not having health insurance is still a risk factor for not being adequately screened. It is important for government programs to continue to provide free cervical cancer screening services for underinsured, uninsured, and low income women in California, 25 years and older, to help reduce this disparity.

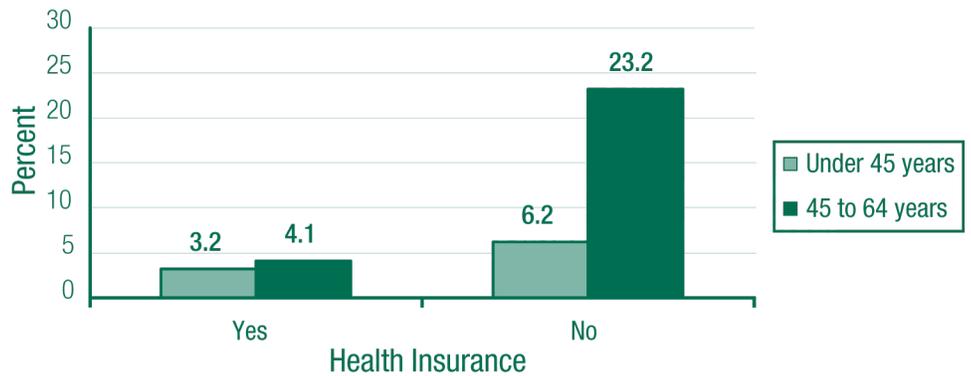
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Is Lack of Health Insurance a Barrier to Cervical Cancer Screening? Experience of California Women Ages 25 to 64 Who are Never or Rarely Screened, 2008

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Figure 1

Women Never or Rarely Screened for Cervical Cancer by Age and Health Insurance Status, California, 2008



Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2008

- 1 Meissner HI, Yabroff KR, Dodd KW, Leader AE, Ballard-Barbash R, Berrigan D. Are patterns of health behavior associated with cancer screening? *Am J Health Promot.* 2009;23(3):168-175.
- 2 Westin SN, Bustillos D, Gano JB, et al. Social factors affecting treatment of cervical cancer – ethical issues and policy implications. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2008;111(3):747-751.

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